

TALES OF TO-DAY.

BY

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AUTHOR OF,

“ARIEL”—“ELLA ST. LAURENCE”—

“WANDERINGS OF FANCY”—

&c. &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

CONTAINING

THE HEIRESS OF RIVERSDALE.

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THE
HEIRESS OF RIVERSDALE.

CHAP. I.

CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES.

DURING that dreary season, which it has been the custom for English hospitality to crown with festivity, the ivy-clad towers of Riversdale echoed the song of mirth, and the sportive laugh of unrestrained vivacity. The amiable Baronet, its possessor, eager to promote the happiness, and contribute to the comfort of those around him, had selected a cheerful party of friends, to spend the Christmas

with him at the manor. It was a noble mansion, of Gothic architecture; report proclaimed, that it had once been the residence of royalty. How it came into the possession of the ancestors of the family which at present inhabited it, was never clearly ascertained, but from a long line of progenitors it had descended to Sir William Riversdale, a man of the most exemplary character, and winning manners. He had married young, solely from attachment, and two years of the purest felicity succeeded.

The instability of worldly happiness has been often the theme of the moralist—it was exemplified in the fate of Sir William and Lady Riversdale; the latter, in two years after her marriage, gave birth to a daughter, and in the same hour resigned her existence. Sir William was inconsolable; nor was it till the opening graces of his daughter called forth that tender interest, known only to the mind of a parent, that he began to recover from the

melancholy which had pervaded his temper and manner from that fatal period.

Eloisa Riversdale, as she grew in years, became the pride and delight of her father; and she had attained the age of fourteen, when the solicitations and advice of his friends, together with an avowed partiality on the lady's side, once more induced him to enter the marriage state; not however with those sanguine hopes of happiness which had marked his early engagement, but with an earnest desire to find for his daughter a substitute for the parent whom she had lost.

The second Lady Riversdale was a lively, fascinating woman: graceful in her manners, handsome in person, and gay in disposition, she was universally admired. She had no family, and was therefore better enabled to gratify her prevailing passions, an inordinate love of pleasure and thirst for admiration. In a very short time, Sir William Riversdale discovered that he had failed in procuring, what had

been his two great inducements for entering into a second marriage; the having a friend and companion for himself, and a mother for his daughter, whose precepts might improve her heart and understanding, and whose example might guide her in the path of virtue.

The motives which had influenced Lady Riversdale in her engagement with the Baronet, were widely different from those by which he had been actuated. The prospect of an establishment, which would enable her to indulge her favourite propensities, with a man, who, though many years her senior, was yet graceful in manners, agreeable in person, and generally respected, determined her, if possible, to complete the conquest.

Her father, a country Baronet of small fortune, died when she was very young, and left her wholly dependent on a brother, whose intimacy with Sir William Riversdale gave her frequent opportunities of seeing him. In the country, matches are

often made, and the marriage articles drawn, before the parties have exchanged more than the common civilities due to strangers. The voice of report brought to the ear of Sir William, the news of his engagement with Miss Worthington, before he had ever suffered the idea of any female, save that of his lost Eloisa, to intrude on his heart. He had certainly admired the sister of his friend, and thought her one of the most lively agreeable women he had ever seen ; but his affections were so completely buried in the grave of his wife, except that portion of them which her little representative claimed, that he conceived it impossible any other female could ever share them : but Sir William was a mortal, and Miss Worthington had the art of appearing what she pleased. Their mutual friends determined it should be a match ; and in a year after the rumour was published, Miss Worthington became Lady Riversdale.

Poor Eloisa was the first who felt the

cruel contrast produced by her admission into the family. She had been reared by a relation of her late mother, a woman of exemplary character and refined manners. Mrs. Lovel was the widow of an officer, and had been the early and intimate friend of the first Lady Riversdale, who, on her death-bed, requested Sir William to receive her into his house, and to suffer her to educate her daughter. He hesitated not an instant in complying with her request; and under her care, the child of her friend became all the fondest parent could wish. Sir William doated on her, and scarcely ever suffered her to be out of his sight, till his engagement with Miss Worthington commenced; he then began to relax in his attentions, and though he still passionately loved her, his lady found means so completely to attach him to herself, that Eloisa was often forgotten.

After the marriage, however, and particularly after the real character of Lady Riversdale became known to Sir William,

all his affection for his Eloisa reassumed its sway over his heart, and again the apartments where she and Mrs. Lovel spent their time, was his favourite resort ; for Lady Riversdale was not at all desirous of making a companion of Eloisa, and was often hinting her strong disapprobation of young ladies being introduced to the world at too early an age. But while Mrs. Lovel lived, her pupil's extreme fondness for her, which was truly that of a child, and the real attachment that subsisted between them, prevented Eloisa from feeling so severely as she otherwise would, the contrast which the character of her step-mother formed, to that of the amiable woman by whom she had been educated.

Two years before the period at which this narrative commences, Eloisa had the misfortune to lose her maternal friend. She was now grown a tall, beautiful girl ; but it was remarked by the servants, (for Lady Riversdale would seldom suffer her to come into company, but kept her con-

stantly confined to the nursery,) that she had never quite recovered her vivacity since the death of Mrs. Lovel; it had left a pensiveness in her manner certainly not natural to her, for she had always been remarkable for a playfulness of temper, that gave additional charms to a very attractive countenance.

But notwithstanding this source of regret, which yet dwelt on her affectionate mind, Eloisa's native gaiety enabled her to enjoy, with all her wonted animation, the annual ball held at Riversdale manor, on the last day of the year 17—, at which she was permitted to be present for an hour or two in the evening. Her light sylph-like figure never appeared to such advantage, as when she gaily led off the festive dance; her father contemplated her with rapture—it was then she most strongly recalled to his recollection her sainted mother, her, whom in secret he had never ceased to deplore; but though in his breast the graceful form of Eloisa excited

the most pleasing emotions; in that of his lady, her appearance created feelings of a very different nature.

Lady Riversdale saw in her daughter-in-law a powerful competitor in those advantages, which her own narrow illiberal mind most highly valued, youth and beauty—and she nourished privately the bitterest enmity towards their innocent possessor. Eloisa was universally admired by the company, and Lady Riversdale was so discomposed by the encomiums she overheard on all sides, that she resolved to order her to her chamber, even before her usual early hour.

“ Oh do, mamma, suffer me to go down one more dance; they have just called my favourite, and then indeed I will obey you.”

“ No, Miss Riversdale,” said her Ladyship, “ late hours are very injurious to your health, and I desire you will retire immediately.”

“ Oh, one more dance, only one more,” said Eloisa with a beseeching look.

“ Only one pray, dear Lady Riversdale,” said another voice ;—it was that of ‘Eloisa’s partner, an elegant youth, who by nature seemed designed her counterpart. With a countenance all animation, he joined Eloisa in supplicating for “ one more dance,” but all in vain ; Lady Riversdale was deaf to their entreaties, and poor Eloisa was obliged, with slow unwilling steps, to attend the servant who had been summoned to conduct her to her apartment.

Nor did she quit the ball-room at eleven o’clock, with more reluctance than her partner saw her depart ; his glistening eyes followed her fine form to the door, and he mentally uttered an execration on the tyrant, who thus condemned her to seclusion. Sir William too, would have been glad to indulge Eloisa on this occasion, with the “ one more dance” she had so earnestly solicited ; but he had been so

long accustomed to submit implicitly to the arbitrary will of his youthful Lady, that he could not resolve to dispute her authority ; and he heaved a deep sigh, as Eloisa, with hardly suppressed tears, bade him softly a good night.

She did not retire immediately. She leaned from the little casement in her dressing-room, which, in one of the towers of the building, overlooked the whole domain of Riversdale, and hearing still the gay sounds of the music and dancing, she sighed at the humiliating contrast, which her own solitary chamber presented.

“ Will you choose to go to bed now, ma’am ? ” was twice repeated by her attendant, before she could sufficiently collect her thoughts to answer.

“ No ;—pray, Norman, leave me for the present, and I will ring when I am inclined to retire.”

Mrs. Norman obeyed, and Eloisa, alone, gave full scope to her reflexions. They were soon interrupted by a rap at the door.

She flew to open it—"Perhaps," thought she, "her Ladyship has repented, and has sent to recal me."—But no, it was only a servant who brought her fan, which in her unwilling retreat, she had left behind her in the ball-room.

"Have you no message for me?" said she.

"No, madam," answered the servant, "Mr. Henry Percival only desired me to give you this," and having delivered the fan, he disappeared.

Eloisa took it, and threw herself into a chair. The fan was one that had been given her by her father; it was plain white with a gold border, and in the centre on one side was a French *jeu d'esprit*, with an appropriate device, but the other side was plain; as she now thoughtlessly opened and closed the fan, she was suddenly surprised to observe some lines on the blank side of it, and on examination read, in a very small hand, neatly traced in pencil, these lines:

TO THE GENIUS OF THE FAN.

Go, airy trifle, swiftly fly,
To Eloisa waft the sigh
 That flutters in this breast ;
Tell her how blank the scene appears,
Nor dancers please, nor music cheers,
 With her no longer blest.
 To thee, sweet maid,
 By Fancy's aid
 In thought I'll flee ;
 Thy lonely tower
 A fairy bower
Of happiness with thee would be.

Eloisa blushed—she knew the characters of Henry Percival, and his initials at the bottom of the lines, left no doubt by whom they were traced—they were read over and over again. “ Ah ! who else,” thought she, “ would think of me so partially !” The fan seemed at once to possess the power of a talisman, and the eyes of Eloisa were riveted on it, till suddenly she heard the midnight sound ; she roused herself, and ringing for her attendant, re-

tired to rest:—but there are two circumstances to be remarked; the first, that after the restoration of her fan, Eloisa had never once thought more of her step mother's severity, in compelling her to leave the party so early; and the second, that she became so remarkably absent, as by some strange chance to deposit her fan, perhaps by mistake, beneath her pillow, on which she very soon sunk into the sweet sleep of innocence.

CHAP. II.

PROJECTS.

THE feudal rejoicings, which reminded every beholder of days long past, when yet the spirit of old English hospitality actuated the conduct of our forefathers, were only preparatory to an event, which Sir William Riversdale had long anticipated, as the epoch from which he was to date the happiness of her, who was dearer to him than all the world besides, his darling Eloisa. From her infancy, one scheme had occupied most of his daily thoughts, and not unfrequently been the subject of his nightly visions. In childhood, he had formed a friendship with a youth of the name of St. Edmond; they had imbibed

the first rudiments of education together, were at the same college, and every passing year had augmented their intimacy, till St. Edmond, who was the heir to immense property, had quitted England on his travels. Sir William would fain have been his companion, but his father was averse to the plan, and St. Edmond visited France and Italy, attended only by his tutor. He had married an Italian of noble birth, and thereby incurred the displeasure of his family, who, having nourished many old fashioned prejudices in favour of their own country-women, highly disapproved his alliance with a foreigner. St. Edmond brought his bride to England, where they generally resided; and his friendship with Sir William Riversdale, with whom he had always kept up a regular correspondence, was renewed with warmth on both sides.

Lady Riversdale and Mrs. St. Edmond became as firmly attached as their husbands; and the singular circumstance of

each giving birth on the same day of the year to her first child, was the foundation of that plan which had amused the mind of the good baronet.

Edward St. Edmond and Eloisa Riversdale, the latter born on the second anniversary of the birth-day of the former, seemed from their earliest existence designed for each other; but when Eloisa was two years old, they were separated by the death of Mrs. St. Edmonds' father, who possessed an ample estate near Naples, which, devolving to his daughter, obliged St. Edmond and his family to visit it; not with any intention of a permanent residence, but merely to make the necessary arrangements, and then return to England, where they intended to purchase a mansion contiguous to Riversdale: but providence awfully interfered, ere this plan could be put in execution, and the amiable Mrs. St. Edmond was destined no more to visit the land, where she had hoped for many years of felicity. She was

naturally of a delicate constitution ; and the shock which she had received from the death of her friend Lady Riversdale, had contributed to aid the ravages of a rapid decline. Her native air had been advised, and her father's decease happening at this juncture, the journey to Italy was undertaken, in the vain hope that it would prove efficacious in the re-establishment of her health.

She only lived three months after her arrival, and left her husband inconsolable for her loss. An extreme depression seized on his spirits, and he became so attached to the spot where he had first known his beloved Ellena, and where she had breathed her last, that the solicitations of his friends were unavailing to prevail on him to return to England, where with her he had so happily resided.

In the education of his son, and in corresponding with Sir William Riversdale, (their friendship now more than ever cemented by the melancholy bond of sym-

pathy,) Mr. St. Edmond passed his days. Frequently was the plan of uniting their children, should they live to reach years of maturity, repeated. Young St. Edmond was kept in ignorance of his future destination, till he should be of an age to understand the advantages of the proposed union. Sir William Riversdale, on the contrary, had made it often a subject of conversation with Eloisa, who, ignorant of aught beyond the precincts of her nursery, had no will but that of her parent. The anxious desire of the good Baronet, that the affections of his daughter should be reserved for the son of his friend, induced him the more readily to comply with his lady's plan, of secluding Eloisa from all company.

Her earliest friend and companion was a ward of her father's, four years older than herself. Henry Percival was the son of an old friend of Sir William Riversdale's, who, on his death-bed, had left his child to the sole guardianship of the Baronet ;

and Harry Percival, then a boy of twelve years old, became an inmate at Riversdale, in the childhood of Eloisa.

Those useful qualities, foresight and perspicuity, formed no part of the character of Sir William Riversdale ; goodness of heart, and genuine simplicity of manners, were its predominant features : and so entirely had the idea of Eloisa becoming the wife of St. Edmond possessed his imagination, that the danger of rearing her in habits of intimacy with any other, never once occurred to him. Solicitous only to preserve her from the gay young men and fashionable libertines, introduced by the connexions of his second lady, he never once suspected, that a far more dangerous obstacle to his favourite plan, existed in his own mansion.

Every successive year added to the beauty of Eloisa's person, but her manners would have been wholly unformed, had not Mrs. Lovel been careful to correct that extreme vivacity, which, overstepping the

bounds of all prudence, would often cause her to be sent in disgrace from the parlour, and by the orders of Lady Riversdale to be confined whole days to her apartment.

Henry Percival was early sent to college, and at twenty-one came into possession of a good fortune ; but as the mansion house, situated about four miles from Riversdale, was out of repair, he had it levelled with the ground, and remained with his guardian till it was rebuilt.

Nearly a year previous to the present period, the father of St. Edmond died, after a short illness, and on his death-bed gave into the hands of his son a sealed packet, directed to Sir William Riversdale, with a request that it might be sent to England immediately after his death.

“ I die happy, my dear Edward,” said his expiring parent, “ in the certainty that you will fulfil the long cherished hopes of your family, by marrying the daughter of my earliest friend, at the time I shall appoint. I know you will be anxious to tes-

tify your duty and affection to your father. I shall therefore not expect you to change your present situation, till a twelvemonth after my decease ; but when that period is expired, it is my dying request that you delay your nuptials no longer."

Edward, in extreme agitation, gave the promise required, and after his father had breathed his last, despatched the packet to Sir William Riversdale. It contained the will of his friend, with a letter, intimating the same wish he had expressed to his son. The attachment, and even veneration, which Sir William had ever felt towards St. Edmond was such, that not for worlds would he have swerved from the very letter of his request ; and a correspondence was begun with his future son-in-law, who, it was arranged, should come to England at the time specified by his father, to receive the hand of Eloisa. The latter heard the intelligence of his approach, with the same childish indifference, which she had as yet manifested on the subject.

After the death of the good Mrs. Lovel, the governess appointed to attend her, was one chosen by her mother-in-law.

Miss Bridget Danderville had been as well educated, as a very shallow capacity would allow; her mind was as contracted as her knowledge of the world, which was in truth limited enough; but Lady Riversdale had no wish that her daughter-in-law should eclipse herself, which, if she had continued under the tuition of Mrs. Lovel, she promised to do, and Miss Bridget Danderville appeared to her to be precisely the person she sought. The humble adulator of my lady, as well as the instructress of Eloisa, Miss Danderville became very soon a great favourite with her Ladyship, and Eloisa was too young and thoughtless to be particular: her excessive grief for Mrs. Lovel, made her indifferent who was her successor; and as Miss Danderville, at her first arrival, took infinite pains to make herself agreeable, and Eloisa had naturally the sweetest tem-

per in the world, they were soon very good friends.

Henry Percival first opened the eyes of Eloisa to the deficiencies of her governess. Long, in secret, had he lamented that the mind, formed by the excellent Mrs. Lovel, should, ere it had quite expanded, be left to the care of one so inadequate to the task, as the ignorant Miss Danderville; and he gently suggested to his fair friend his wonder, that such a person should be placed about her.

Percival was a youth, whose heart and understanding did honour to human nature. He became early well acquainted with the eccentricities of Sir William's character, and he saw with latent sorrow, the despotic sway Lady Riversdale maintained over him and his household; nor would he on any other subject have interfered—but where Eloisa was concerned, he could not refrain. A hint was sufficient; observation soon taught her that Percival's remarks on Miss Danderville

were just, and she thought only more highly of him for enlightening her on the subject.

In many of her studies, Percival had from childhood been her instructor and assistant, during the vacations, which he always passed at Riversdale; and often had he persuaded Mrs. Lovel to suffer her charge to take an evening ramble with him, while Sir William and his Lady were absent in company.

The distance and reserve Percival ever observed towards Lady Riversdale, had made him no great favourite with her; she had often called him an awkward, proud, self-sufficient youth, much to the regret of Sir William, who felt even a paternal fondness for his ward; but of late years, her Ladyship had much relaxed towards him. The "proud, awkward, self-sufficient youth," was now shot up into the elegant, accomplished man, and Lady Riversdale was glad to secure him as an atten-

dant to her evening parties, and an escort in her morning excursions.

Neither in the evening parties, nor morning excursions, was poor Eloisa ever suffered to share ; and when from the window she sometimes watched her Ladyship, mounted on a spirited horse, equipped for the chase, and accompanied by Percival, ride out of the court yard, or saw him hand her into an elegant curricie, how did she sigh, and wish she too could enjoy such privileges.

A wish of this kind had one morning involuntarily escaped her lips, as she stood by the grated casements of the nursery apartments, and beheld a sight she had so often contemplated, and fancied herself alone, nor had observed that Lucy Norman, the nursery attendant, and her own favourite servant, was present. Lucy smiled significantly.

“ I’m sure, Miss,” said she, “ I don’t wonder at you, cooped up as you are in a

nursery at your years, like a bird in a cage; but my Lady can't keep you so much longer, that's one good thing. Mr. St. Edmond will soon be here, Miss, and then you'll be married, and be your own mistress, and be happy of course."

"Shall I, Lucy?" said Eloisa, and then sighing, she added, "I wonder whether Mr. St. Edmond is like Henry Percival."

Miss Danderville at this moment entered the room with Eloisa's music-master, and nothing more on this subject reached the ear of our heroine, till her father announced the approach of her lover.

The idea of St. Edmond was so connected with that of liberty, that the sound of his name was delightful to her. New clothes and wedding presents succeeded, and the Christmas gaieties saw Eloisa one of the happiest of the happy; she danced every evening with Percival, and only thought of St. Edmond, as being the object who caused her felicity, as it was on

his account she was brought forward to notice. She pictured him in her mind's eye the counterpart of Henry Percival, and felt almost assured that she should like him as well ; at least, she had no wish to believe the contrary.

CHAP. III.

A RUSTIC BAS BLEU.

HAPPY are the delusions of youth ! and most melancholy that inevitable period in the life of man, when the veil of juvenile ardour is withdrawn, by the slow, but certain hand of experience !

This visionary happiness had, hitherto, been the unalloyed portion of the innocent Eloisa. Ignorant of the world and its sorrows, her life had passed in the most perfect serenity, till the death of Mrs. Lovel ; the first source of grief she had ever known, and since that time, the kind exertions of Henry Percival, by directing her studies, and lending her every friendly assistance in her various pursuits, had greatly con-

tributed to ameliorate her grief, and had left on her mind a dangerous kind of gratitude, which seemed to increase with every passing year; but wholly unconscious of her own sentiments, and ever considering herself the affianced wife of St. Edmond, she fearlessly cherished an attachment, which by no one of the family was even suspected.

The only female companion of her own age, with whom she had ever associated, was the daughter of Lady Riversdale's brother, Sir George Worthington. Harriet Worthington had, from infancy, much originality in her character: her father was a professed fox-hunter, and her mother had died ere Harriet had attained her second year. Her aunt was far too refined and delicate, to be capable of superintending the education of her niece, who, adored by her father, became his sole companion; she accompanied him in his sports, and ere she had reached her fourteenth year, could leap a five-barred gate, or ford a

river, as courageously as any gentleman of the hunt.

Her person was handsome, and her heart and temper excellent, but she had received an education seldom given to girls; her father could never be persuaded to send her to school, and the old house-keeper was the only governess she could endure; his chaplain, he said, "could teach her to read and write, and if she liked Greek and Latin, she might learn them also."

Music he highly approved, for Harriet had a fine voice, and almost as soon as she could speak, he had himself taught her two or three of his favourite hunting songs. A music-master, therefore, was suffered to attend her, but this was the extent of her accomplishments. Harriet, however, had a thirst for knowledge; and as Greek and Latin were not prohibited with French, drawing, &c., to Greek and Latin she applied with the Rev. Mr. Fletcher, who, happening to be a man of deep learning

and rare classical attainments, took infinite pains with his pupil, and Harriet, under his tuition, became no contemptible scholar.

She loved study, and she pursued it with avidity for her own amusement : she loved her father with enthusiasm, and to oblige and please him she followed the hounds, or accompanied him in coursing or shooting all day, and after dinner would play and sing to him, till his evening nap was the signal for study ; then, with ardour unabated by the fatigues of the day, would she plunge into Greek and Roman lore with Mr. Fletcher, till she was obliged to rejoin Sir George on his awaking, make his tea, and again would she sing him to sleep with the same unvarying sweetness of temper.

Accustomed only to the society of men, her manners, though untinctured with boldness, acquired an ease and freedom, uncommon in a female of her age. Naturally of a strong mind, and from the na-

ture of her education, rendered superior to the frivolous pursuits of girls in general, her conversation was so singular and original, that though generally admired by the gentlemen, the ladies were afraid of her, and by the few of her own sex whom she encountered in occasional visits, she was either shunned or dreaded;—but to Harriet it was a subject of indifference. Unconscious of meriting ridicule, it failed to wound, and she would talk to the gentlemen on subjects far beyond the reach of any female present, with the most perfect ease and nonchalance, and utterly regardless of the wonder and curiosity she excited.

Though Harriet's temper was sweet and complying, yet from having been accustomed always to her own guidance, she was apt to run into extremes; violent in her resentments, and as violent in her attachments, she was seldom in a medium, but either loved or hated with equal ardour and impetuosity. She was devotedly

attached to Eloisa, and as cordially detested Lady Riversdale and her favourite Miss Danderville, whose ignorance and conceit so strongly excited her contempt, that no policy could induce her to pay either much attention.

In speaking of the former she would say, "Though she be my aunt, my dear Eloisa, yet I cannot forget that she is a caricature of a mother-in-law to you; and though dear Henry Percival is constantly enforcing the propriety of obedience and attention towards her, I really cannot conceive there is much obligation to practise either. If my father had followed her advice, I should have been a *weed*; and as my disposition is not quite so gentle as yours, should probably have degenerated into a *nettle*."

Sir William Riversdale, who sometimes joined Sir George in his amusements, though by no means so great a sportsman, often invited Miss Worthington with her

father, and Eloisa became the favourite friend of the lively but eccentric Harriet.

Lady Riversdale, whose fashionable manners and indolence of habit, revolted at every thing like country sports, bitterly deprecated the education her niece had received ; she termed her a vulgar hoyden, and kept her at such an awful distance, that on those days when Harriet accompanied her father to dine at the Hall, she was delighted to escape, after dinner, to the nursery apartments, where the imprisoned Eloisa ever received her with pleasure ; and often joined by Henry Percival, they would take long rambles in the plantations by moon-light, while Lady Riversdale was engaged with the ladies of her party in the drawing-room.

Like his friend Sir William, Sir George Worthington had early planned the future disposal of his daughter in marriage. The next heir to his title and family estate, was the son of a younger brother, who dying, left this his only child under the care of

his uncle : but knowing the disposition of Sir George, and wishing the young heir to soar beyond the character of a mere country gentleman, he had, on his death-bed, enjoined him to travel, and to acquire the information and accomplishments requisite for the heir of the family he was hereafter to represent.

Harriet had not seen him since he was seventeen ; but though she had been taught to consider him as her future husband, on this subject she was not so pliable as Eloisa ; and she often amused her companion, and her favourite Henry Percival, by her conjectures as to her future *caro sposa*. Accustomed to think for herself, she was strongly inclined, from her recollection of what her cousin was when she had last seen him, to believe their dispositions would not assimilate.

“ Ten to one,” said she, “ but he will meet with somebody abroad that he will prefer to such a rustic as I am ; besides, he was never very brilliant as a boy ; I re-

member he was reckoned very stupid at school, and I certainly never can persuade myself to marry a fool, even though he be destined to represent the ancient and honourable family of Worthington."

Henry often laughed at doubts thus oddly expressed, but Harriet always thought aloud; he regarded her with the affection of a brother; the extreme goodness of her heart induced those who loved her, to pardon the abruptness of her manners, and the frankness and vivacity of her temper were to them apology sufficient, for all that to strangers seemed hoydenish and rude in her deportment.

Though Eloisa, by the narrow policy of her step-mother, had been precluded from enjoying the society that frequented her father's mansion, there was one family to whom her visits had not been prohibited, at whose house, in company with her dear companions Henry and Harriet, some of her happiest hours were passed.

On the confines of Riversdale park, in a

sequestered valley, stood the residence of Mr. Stanley, a venerable clergyman, who had from infancy been the intimate and beloved friend of Sir William Riversdale, and on the death of Henry Percival's father, Sir William had appointed Mr. Stanley tutor to the young heir.

Mr. Stanley was one of those characters that do honour to the sacred function : on a very small stipend, encreased by the bounty of the good Baronet, he had officiated as curate to the rector of Riversdale, who died at an advanced period, and after having waited ten years he succeeded to the living. From that time, he had been the constant companion of his old friend, who had been accustomed to consult him on most actions of his life ; and except in the one instance of his second marriage, had uniformly followed his advice.

His family, consisting of a wife and one daughter, were the early friends of Eloisa. Mrs. Stanley was a sensible, amiable woman, and her daughter was all that might

be expected from such parents. As a matter of form, the ladies, once or twice in a year, accompanied Mr. Stanley to dine at the manor ; but the retired manners of the clergyman's wife, ill suited the gaiety and fashion of Lady Riversdale, who openly ridiculed the whole family.}

CHAP. IV.

A CHANGE IN AFFAIRS.

HOW uncertain is the life of man, and the events by which it is diversified ! Scarcely were the Christmas rejoicings terminated, ere two circumstances occurred which changed the whole face of affairs at Riversdale manor. The first was a letter from St. Edmond, which, to the utter astonishment of Sir William, contained these words :

My Dear Sir,

Since the irreparable loss of my dear father, my health has been in such a precarious state, as to render me incapable of undertaking a journey to England, and

it is now the advice of the faculty that I should travel for some months in a warm climate. This being the case, I am apprehensive that I shall not be able to reach England at present. Whatever occurs to me on my projected tour, my dear Sir, I hope you will believe, that I shall always retain the most grateful sense of your friendship for my late father, and of your intentions towards myself; yet allow me to add, that I feel on the latter subject not a little tenacious, and inclined to fear, that the happiness of Miss Riversdale may not be formed by an alliance with a stranger. Let me supplicate, should this be the case, that I may be the sacrifice, and that no coercive measures may be adopted to compel a forced acquiescence.

“Time will be allowed you to consider and resolve; and believe me, whatever may be your determination, to it I shall implicitly submit; but once more I conjure you to remember, that the peace of your child may be at stake.

“ My friendly and grateful regards await Lady Riversdale, and my early friend Eloisa. Judge me not unfavourably, my dear Sir. The human heart is a mass of contrariety, and presents a melancholy picture of imperfection. Hard is it for mortal frailty to judge with precision, on what may form its future happiness or misery. Few can decide for themselves, much less for another. Of this truth, experience has too fatally convinced

“ EDWARD ST. EDMOND.”

Sir William's astonishment on perusing this epistle may be easier conceived than described: that there was some secret repugnance on the part of St. Edmond to fulfil his contract, he was very unwilling to believe; and yet the air of mystery that pervaded the whole letter, led him to suspect, that there were more forcible reasons for his protracted absence, than any his health offered.

This suspicion, however, he resolved to

conceal within his own breast ; and merely telling Eloisa, that Mr. St. Edmond's arrival was unavoidably postponed, he persevered in his original determination, and in answer to the letter of his future son-in-law, assured him that his daughter's affections would be wholly his, having been reared in the full persuasion, that she was destined for his wife ; and adding, that he trusted the complete restoration of his health, would enable him to visit England early in the ensuing autumn.

While rather impatiently awaiting a reply, which he was never destined to receive, Sir William was seized with an apoplexy, which terminated his existence in a few hours, leaving the agonized Eloisa a prey to the most violent grief. His Lady too, seemed overcome with sorrow, and secluded herself in her own apartment, from which all but Miss Danderville were excluded.

Lady Riversdale had, indeed, ample cause to deplore the late event. Her real

character and disposition, in spite of her native art, had lately, in several instances, been conspicuous ; and Sir William's eyes, once opened to her faults, were not in future so easily closed. The consequence of this discovery was a new will, in which he bequeathed her a handsome annuity for life, in addition to her settlement, leaving the whole of his immense estates to his daughter, who was to take possession of her fortune at the age of nineteen, a period within three months of being accomplished.

It is probable, the internal assurance he felt, that her speedy marriage with St. Edmond would set aside all need of more than a nominal guardian, induced him to name *Henry Percival, Esq.* and *Edward St. Edmond*, as his executors and trustees for his daughter, who was to reside at Riversdale till the period of her minority was expired.

The dowager Lady Riversdale, provoked to find *Eloisa* the person most benefited,

by an event to which she had long looked forward, as the one that was to enable her to enjoy, in their fullest extent, the pleasures of the world, declared her intention of immediately quitting the manor, which she protested she had always considered a living town, and passing the season at Bath, which she thought was quite necessary to the restoration of her health ; and Miss Danderville waited on the young heiress, purposely to inform her, that as she could not think of quitting her dear friend Lady Riversdale, she had determined to accompany her to Bath.

Eloisa heard her resolution with indifference. Her faculties were at present absorbed by grief for the loss of her father, and she had learned from Henry to regard Miss Danderville only with that degree of consideration she deserved. Harriet Worthington, who had flown to her on the first news of Sir William's death, remained at the manor, and with her native good-

ness of heart, exerted all her abilities to soothe and amuse her.

As soon as Lady Riversdale had taken her departure, Henry Percival retired to his own estate, leaving a note for Eloisa, in which he said, that though propriety dictated his removal, she would ever find him warmly devoted to her service and interest. He concluded in these words :

“ The trust which my revered guardian has delegated to me, I consider as merely nominal, and as only held till the arrival of Mr. St. Edmond in England, when it is my intention wholly to relinquish it, that your happiness and fortune may at once be put in possession of him, who is destined to contribute to the former, and ultimately to possess the latter. Yet not even he, the fortununate Mr. St. Edmond, can more fervently pray, that happiness may shed her benign influence over the fate of Miss Riversdale, than does her

“ Faithful Friend,

“ H. PERCIVAL.”

As soon as Sir William's last will had been made known, Percival had repaired to Mr. Stanley. The latter had attended the death-bed of his friend and patron, and his grief was scarcely inferior to that felt by Eloisa herself. Deeply interested for the young and beautiful heiress, he constantly visited her, and Mrs. Stanley and Louisa were the only persons she admitted.

Since the death of his guardian, Henry had almost resided at the rectory; for some hours every day he had conferred privately with Mr. Stanley, and it is probable, his subsequent conduct was as much the result of that gentleman's counsel, as his own judgment.

The tears of Eloisa flowed silently while she perused Henry's epistle, and again the hope that St. Edmond resembled him arose in her mind. She felt vexed that he had left the manor, without seeking a personal interview; and she wept unrestrainedly while she thought that they were finally

separated. She determined, however, that he should be introduced to Mr. St. Edmond, on his arrival, with every flattering encomium; and had no doubt, that he would be as partial to him as she was.—“And then,” thought she, “he will of course visit us constantly, and I shall perhaps feel as happy as I have always been accustomed to feel when he was present.”

But though time, that great soother of grief, much ameliorated her anguish for the loss of her father, it had no power to diminish her anxiety on another subject. Days and weeks elapsed, and yet Percival did not appear. He sent frequently to enquire after her health, and when she had vainly expected him for some time, and for many successive mornings had seated herself at a window of her dressing-room, which commanded a view of the road that led to Percival's estate, unconscious herself of her motive for choosing that seat, she was one day surprised by the arrival of a servant with a letter from Mr. Percival,

in which he informed her, that he had yielded to the persuasions of his friend Sir Herbert Macdonald, to accompany him on his long projected tour to the Continent. He added, that he was sorry his time was so limited, that he feared it would be impossible to take a personal farewell, and concluded in these words :

“ It is probable, that ere I return to England, Miss Riversdale may have lost all claim to the appellation by which I now address her. In the hands of our mutual friend Mr. Stanley, I have left a letter, to be delivered to Mr. St. Edmond on his arrival ; and in my worthy tutor, I am assured my fair ward will find an adviser, (should she think it necessary to consult him,) far more competent for the office, and not less devoted to her interest than her early friend,

“ H. PERCIVAL.”

“ How cold, how unlike Henry !” said Eloisa to Harriet, as she threw down the

letter. "Surely he must be greatly altered;" and the tears, in spite of a slight degree of pride that was roused by this mark of neglect, forced themselves into her eyes.

The Continental tour had been projected for Percival, before the death of Sir William, and had been delayed by that event. Harriet looked stedfastly at her for some minutes, and then, with the blunt sincerity that characterized her, exclaimed;

"Well, I wish you were going to marry Henry Percival, instead of this foreign St. Edmond, for I really believe you will never either of you like any other person so well."

Eloisa made no answer, but Harriet's speech sunk deeply into her inexperienced mind. It seemed to clear at once the mist from her mental sight, and opened to her view the prospect of happiness, which she might have possessed, had no St. Edmond existed.

From this hour, she mentioned the

name of Percival no more ; but it was observable, that a restlessness and anxiety sometimes appeared on her countenance, that seemed unnatural to her. When Mr. Stanley visited her he was astonished to observe, that when he mentioned Henry, she was reserved, said little, and seemed to wish to change the subject.

Very soon, to the surprise of the Stanley family and Harriet, she declared an intention of visiting town, as soon as the period of her minority was expired ; and in the mean time, she seemed anxious to avoid recurring to former days of happiness. She often mentioned St. Edmond, and wondered that no intelligence had been received from him. In all her conversations with Harriet on the subject, she appeared desirous that she and all her friends should think, that she considered her engagement as irrevocable ; but the restless impatience of her manner betrayed a mind ill at ease.

It was at this eventful period of her life,

that Eloisa most required the counsel of a maternal friend. Mrs. Stanley was the only person of her acquaintance, at all calculated to replace Mrs. Lovel in this office; and she had been too little in the habit of intimate association with Eloisa to seek her confidence.

“How much does that interesting girl require a monitor,” said she to Mr. Stanley, in talking of Eloisa, “now that she is on the verge of that precipice the world. She has rare talents and endowments, and, I think, an excellent heart. What a pity that they should not make her good and happy.”

“And why, my dear, do you doubt her being so?” asked Mr. Stanley.

“Because,” she answered, “she has a susceptibility of temper very inimical to happiness, if it be not properly directed. Our good hearted, eccentric Harriet can be of no service to her, at this critical period of her life. She says every thing she thinks, which, perhaps just now, would be

better avoided. Miss Riversdale's critical and delicate situation, with regard to St. Edmond, renders it peculiarly desirable that she should have some judicious friend, who would prepare her for what she may have to expect. Accustomed to the society of our noble Percival, she has too certainly fixed on him as her standard of perfection. Every look, every word betrayed it, even in their occasional visits here, and is she not in that case sure of a disappointment? for oh! how few resemble him!"

"Few indeed!" said Mr. Stanley, "but this, you know my dear, is a prohibited subject; else, how fervently could we, who know his excellence, wish that he were destined for the blooming daughter of our late worthy friend; but I need not remind you, my love, that it is the will of providence we oppose, when we utter this wish. Let us then silently submit, and humbly hope, that our inestimable Percival will receive the reward of the virtuous resolution he has manifested, in quitting his na-

tive country on a principle of honour. Long ere he returns to it, I trust his peace will be restored."

Mrs. Stanley looked incredulous, and Mr. Stanley added, " Rely on it, whatever be the implicit faith you place in early attachments, they seldom survive the total demolition of hope, even in weak minds ; but with such a heart, such an understanding as Percival possesses, there is no danger that good sense will not gain a speedy and absolute victory."

Since the death of Sir William, and the removal of his lady, Louisa Stanley had been almost the constant companion of Eloisa and Harriet. Though of mild and retired manners, she inherited her father's good understanding, as well as his rectitude of principle, and she heard with deep regret the frequently repeated resolutions of Eloisa, to emerge at once into all the gaieties of London the ensuing winter.

" I wish, my dear Miss Riversdale," said she, " that you may not find yourself

mistaken in your anticipations of the pleasures of the metropolis : but I have so often heard my father describe their insufficiency to give permanent happiness to a rational mind, that I am half inclined to fear, that you raise your expectations too high."

"The change may at least make me forget all I have lost at Riversdale," said Eloisa, sighing."

"Never, I hope," said Louisa, "will it have that effect. Oh! can you for a moment wish to forget the scenes of juvenile happiness? Never, I trust, will you lose a recollection of those local habits and attachments, which have so long formed your felicity, the remembrance of which is connected with all that renders existence desirable. I never visited town but once, but it was then my fate to be what is called very gay during my visit; and I acknowledge I found its effect any thing rather than oblivious. My head was in a constant whirl, but I retained the faculty of

thinking, amidst all the noise and bustle ; and though as subjects of wonder and curiosity, I admired and enjoyed all I saw at the time, yet never did the rectory, and my wonted habits and amusements appear so delightful, as on my return."

" You are quite right, Louisa," said Harriet, " London is a horrid place after all. My father has twice dragged me there, on his annual visit, but my brains were so bewildered, that I was delighted to get back again. One can neither read nor ride,—there is no rational pleasure to be found, and only the most frivolous amusements. In short, in the very seat of the arts and sciences there is nothing but noise and nonsense."

" But this may not be the case with all," said Eloisa. " Surely in a place where taste and imagination may have such ample scope, *some rational* amusement may be found."

" Assuredly," said Louisa, " Every thing is possible for the mind anxious for its

own independence ; and though we should have preferred seeing you continue to grace your native shades, till Mr. St. Edmond takes you from us, no doubt, that with your talents and advantages, you need not apply to frivolous occupations, even in London, but may surely set an example to the world, rather than take one from it."

A smile beamed over Eloisa's features, as Louisa uttered the last words. She longed to prove, that she could rise superior to the trifling pursuits of the generality of the world. The seeds of ambition, hitherto dormant in her bosom, were roused by being thus reminded of what her fortune and talents would enable her to accomplish, and with all the enthusiasm of youth, she projected numberless visionary schemes, the execution of which would establish her fame, and ensure the admiration of the world.

CHAP. V.

THE MARCHIONESS.

IT is probable that the conversation and society of the Stanley family, would have had the desired effect on the mind of Eloisa, had she not, by one of those unforeseen accidents which so often occur in life, formed at this period an acquaintance, which completed what disappointment and neglect had began.

Harriet Worthington was only suffered by her father, to remain with Eloisa during the summer months; but when the hunting and shooting season commenced, she was recalled to partake with him of his usual sports. Eloisa was often persuaded by Harriet to take a ride in the

carriage, to see the hounds throw off; and it happened one fine morning, that the horses took fright on the declivity of a hill, the summit of which was graced by an elegant mansion, the property of the Marchioness of Harcourt; a gay young dowager, whose celebrity in the world of fashion, had induced Lady Riversdale to cultivate an acquaintance with her, which, before Sir William's death, had ripened into intimacy; but as Lady Harcourt was only in the country in the summer, and early part of the autumn, and Eloisa was never suffered to go into company except at the Christmas ball, she had not been introduced to her Ladyship.

The shouts of the hunters, who were all assembled on the hill, increased the fright of the animals, and Eloisa's life was certainly, for some minutes, in imminent danger. The carriage was overturned, and she was borne lifeless from it, into the house of Lady Harcourt, who being informed of the accident, and that it was

the heiress of Riversdale who was under her roof, ordered every necessary attention to be paid her, and attended in person while the restoratives were applied which brought Eloisa to life.

This circumstance was the foundation of an intimacy, which had no small influence on the subsequent fate of Eloisa.—Whether it was probable it should tend to her happiness, or the contrary, the reader may, in some degree, be enabled to judge from the following letter, written by the Marchioness of Harcourt, to her friend Lady Riversdale.

“ You wonder, my dear friend, that I remain so long in the country: to say the truth, I have been most unexpectedly detained by an event, which will establish me in the character of a *chaperon* for the winter. My *protegee* is no other than your fair daughter-in-law, with whom I have, by chance, formed an acquaintance sooner than I expected.

“ By a wild frolic of that learned, masculine mad-cap your niece, Miss Worthington, Eloisa met with an accident in her carriage, on the hill, and was brought into my mansion in a fainting fit. She is a beautiful creature, and so innocent, or ignorant, which you will, that I perceive plainly, I shall soon gain sufficient ascendancy over her, to answer all my own purposes.

“ Where do you suppose that youthful piece of marble, Percival, has taken himself to? Even to the Continent. All my immediate plans are therefore suspended, but he shall never marry Eloisa, even if this strange St. Edmond should not return to claim her. You will not wonder at my increased anxiety on this subject, when you hear that the Earl of Avonmore’s son is actually dead, and that the old Lord’s grief has reduced him to the verge of the grave. Once gathered to his fathers, Henry Percival becomes heir to the Avonmore title and estate; he paid me a short visit

previous to his excursion, and was more formal and gloomy than usual, but he had been the constant guest of those odious, methodistical Stanleys, ever since Sir William's death drove him, in a fit of propriety, from the manor. No wonder, therefore, if he deemed it all but contamination even to enter my dwelling.

“ I had not then seen the fair heiress, who is now to make her *debut* in town, under my auspices; and it is not improbable, that the *eclat* of her first appearance may reach you at Bath. If the Riversdale hoards are dispersed in those directions to which fashion, fancy and pleasure point, will not Percival, do you think, soon lose all regret at having been deprived of his early idol? for, greatly as I despise his primitive notions, I cannot help plainly seeing, that not even inclination (that rock of youth) can warp the firm integrity of his mind; and if I succeed in making the lovely heiress the character I intend she

shall prove, he will very soon shudder at the idea of such a connexion.

“ I need not explain myself farther to you, my dear Lady Riversdale, who, in heart and mind, are so congenial with

“ Your true friend,

“ EVELINA HARCOURT.”

Far too congenial, indeed, for the peace of the inexperienced Eloisa, were her new friend and her mother-in-law ; but Lady Harcourt was greatly mistaken in the opinion she so hastily formed, of the entire ascendancy she was likely to gain over the mind of Eloisa. The powers of that mind her Ladyship little knew how to estimate ; her extreme youth and innocence had impressed her high-bred friend with ideas to her disadvantage ; but had Eloisa's experience and knowledge of the world been equal to the natural strength of her understanding, the intimacy with a character so dangerous would never have been formed.

Lady Harcourt's origin was obscure, but

her beauty had, at the early age of seventeen, attracted the attention of the gentleman, who, by the rapid deaths of several intermediate claimants, succeeded unexpectedly to the Marquisate of Harcourt. He was more than double her own age, and his death, which liberated her from a man whose only recommendation to her favour, had been the power he possessed to draw her from obscurity, gave her at once riches and independence—dangerous gifts even to stronger understandings and better principled minds, than her Ladyship possessed.

Her person was tall even to a masculine height, her features were regularly beautiful, and her complexion, heightened by the utmost refinement of art, literally vied with the lily and the rose. Her figure was peculiarly graceful, and her snowy arms, bare to the shoulder, reminded the beholder of a fine statue. The elegant ease of her manner, and majestic beauty of her form, excited general admiration; and as

soon as she was emancipated from her nuptial engagement, a number of lovers graced her train, and she beheld admirers of the first rank and fortune at her feet ; but her wonted intrepidity of look and conduct, her love of play and general levity, had one by one distanced them all ; and having dissipated a large fortune in a short time, she was now said to make her love of gaming subservient to her interest.

Her house was the resort of the gay and the dissipated : every allurements to pleasure, every temptation to luxury was to be found there ; and still, though she retained no lovers among those who knew her character, she had always a number of dangles in her train, and never appeared in public unattended by men of the first rank and fashion.

At Riversdale manor she had often seen Henry Percival ; she knew his connexions, his present fortune and future expectations, and she admired his person and appearance ; but Henry was impenetrable to her

advance—he detested her, and evidently avoided her society. The last night of the Christmas rejoicings, when Eloisa's unwillingness to quit the ball-room, and Henry Percival's anxiety for her longer stay, had been so apparent to Lady Riversdale, she became at once convinced of their secret attachment, and her discovery was made known to her friend Lady Harcourt; who accustomed to consider Eloisa as a mere child, was incensed at Percival for the preference, and nourished in her heart an anxious wish, to destroy any hopes he might have formed from St. Edmond's long delay.

The time at length approached, that was destined to introduce Eloisa to that world, from which she had hitherto been secluded, and into which she was prepared, by her own fertile imagination, and the flattering representations of her new friend, to rush with all the ardour and uncontrolled expectation of early youth. No letter from St. Edmond announced his arrival,

and Percival seemed to have forgotten even his guardianship.

Eloisa, whose naturally acute feelings no wise monitor now assisted to regulate, could not bear, even in thought, to revert to the mortifying subject, and continually drove it from her mind, which was wholly filled with anticipations of the pleasure that awaited her in town. A superb house had been hired for her, but till it could be fitted up according to her own taste, she determined to accept the often repeated invitations of Lady Harcourt, to take up her abode with her. The time that intervened between the commencement of Eloisa's acquaintance with the Marchioness, and the period of her London journey, was spent chiefly in her Ladyship's society. The charms of Rose Hill, and the varied attractions of its fair possessor, drew Eloisa a frequent and willing visitor.

Her Ladyship played finely, she strongly recommended Eloisa's acquiring a proficiency in music, and to relieve the de-

pression of her young friend's spirits, she was continually devising some new amusement. So completely did she fascinate Eloisa by her dazzling qualities, and the power she possessed of making her forget all she wished not to remember, that her visits to Worthington Hall and the Rectory had been gradually neglected, and the time for leaving Riversdale arrived, before she became conscious of her inattention.

Their departure was protracted a few days, by the arrival of a distant relation of Lady Harcourt, with his daughter, with whom they were to proceed to town. Sir Herbert Belcour was related by marriage to the late Marquis; he had been on a tour, and was now on his return to his house in London.

"Though believe me, my dear," said Lady Harcourt, in speaking of her approaching visitors to Eloisa, "it is not *me* they come to visit, but *the Marchioness of Harcourt*; if I did not happen to bear that title, I believe I should be honoured

by very little of their notice ; the father's head is full of self-conceit and politics, and the daughter is a mere automaton. Her sister Adelaide is far the most tolerable of the family ; she is the mother's favourite, and esteemed a beauty, which circumstance, of course, entitles her to expect rank and fortune in a husband, and the poor girl is dressed and shewn off in consequence of these expectations ; but to do her justice, she is handsome and agreeable, and I really wish she was coming here to-morrow, instead of her sister."

The visitors exactly answered her Ladyship's description. Sir Herbert was scarcely arrived, ere he requested to see whatever newspapers of the day the house afforded, enquired eagerly if no letters awaited his arrival, hinted that he had hoped to receive private despatches from the Continent, said he must write to a friend high in the ministry by that day's post, and after he had impressed his auditors with proper ideas of his importance, he retired

with much ceremony to Lady Harcourt's library to write his letters.

Miss Belcour looked like a beautiful doll ; she was very thin, very delicate, *very languid, and very affected, dressed in the extreme of the fashion, and lisping out the few words she did speak, in a tone of voice affectedly low.* Harriet Worthington, who came to spend the last day or two with Eloisa, and had accompanied her on this evening to Rose Hill, was highly amused with a character, that formed so striking a contrast to her own.

“ It is a sweet specimen of the gay world, my dear Eloisa,” said she as they returned to the manor. “ Really that pretty doll is so inanimate, that I quite long to give her a gallop over the downs on my *Mopsa* ; it would do her an infinite deal of good. I am not very fond of Lady Harcourt and her ‘ courtly phrases,’ but she is not quite such a mere picture. God forbid, Eloisa, that I should ever see you dwindle into any thing so unnatural.”

On the following day, the venerable Mr. Stanley, who had been informed of Miss Riversdale's approaching departure, called to take leave of her; he listened *with a grave, but attentive aspect*, to all the details she gave him of her plans and projects, and then after a few minutes silence, said---

“ As the friend of your good father, and as the representative of that best of young men, Mr. Percival, I feel authorized, my dear Miss Riversdale, to say that I should have preferred seeing you content, to remain a short time longer at the seat of your ancestors; but I am an old fashioned man, who have been out of the great world, till I am, perhaps, not fit to live in it. It is a theatre, on which your fortune and situation in life, enables you to act a conspicuous part, which to a female must always abound with dangers. In one material point, your fate is decided, being under an irrevocable engagement, you will at least be secure in that respect, from mak-

ing an unworthy choice, but in the selection of friends, of confidants, and advisers, there may be more risque of future repentance.

“ Pardon me my young friend, pardon the liberty I take, in giving you this caution : the time will perhaps come, when you will be aware of the necessity of knowing whom you trust, and of having implicit confidence in yourself, to be rather guided by your own heart and conscience, by your own knowledge of what is right, than by the counsel of those whose worth is yet untried. In Mrs. Stanley, you will always find a maternal friend and counselor ; write to her often, and confide to her any little perplexities or embarrassments, as you would to a mother. I have known you from infancy, and greatly indeed should I grieve, to see the daughter of my friend, the pupil of the sainted Mrs. Lovel, borne away by the torrent of fashion, so entirely, as to forget that the friends, she leaves at Riversdale, are not the ephemera

of a day, but those long tried, long known, and whom in his last moments your excellent father conjured to continue such ; a request which proceeded from his knowledge, that ours was not the friendship that would shrink from trial, but, as it arises from early affection and real principle, would brave even your displeasure, rather than see you act inconsistently with the precepts in which you have been educated."

Eloisa was deeply affected by this speech; she felt conscious, that dazzled by the splendid attractions of her new favourite Lady Harcourt, she had lately neglected her good friends at the Rectory, and she was aware of the reproach Mr. Stanley's words indirectly conveyed ; but so pure was her heart, so really amiable her disposition, that there required no more to bring to her mind a conviction of her error, which she readily acknowledged, and promised regularly to correspond with Mrs. Stanley.

She also declared her intention to visit her and Louisa before she bade adieu to Riversdale. The evening preceding she strolled with Harriet through the plantations, and took leave of every favourite haunt of her early days. Whatever were her feelings, she resolutely concealed them, and though every spot reminded them of Percival, his name was not once mentioned. They entered a rustic building, in front of which the overgrown branches of some old trees, covered with ivy, had entwined, and the three young companions had called it the *Ivy Bower*.

Though Eloisa had frequently passed it in her walks, she had never entered it since the day of her father's death; when, unconscious of the near approach of calamity, she had passed some hours there with Harriet and Percival. She had then sketched a view to be seen through a break in the surrounding foliage, and had left it with the book they had been reading in the drawer of the little table, the

only furniture of the building. Harriet reminded her of it, and said she would restore the book to the library. She entered the building for that purpose, and Eloisa remained at the door; but finding Harriet did not return, she followed her, and found her intent on reading a paper, which she had found within the drawer. The hand-writing instantly struck them as being Percival's, and Eloisa, as she looked over, read the following irregular stanzas :

When the glare of day is lost in night,
By yon pale orb, by the glow-worm's light,
Shall the wand'rer stray through wood and dell,
To bid to each long lov'd scene farewell.

To these alone dare he bid adieu,
To these alone his heart reveal,
That heart, to each early feeling true,
Must still its hidden woe conceal.

Why does the wand'rer's step delay ?
Why does he pause on his lonely way ?
Why does he gaze on yonder tower ?
Why hover his thoughts o'er yon ivy bower ?

Ah, who has the power that step to delay -
Ah, what can arrest his lonely way ?
'Tis the inmate of yon lofty tower,
'Tis the form that haunts yon ivy bower.

For memory does that form recal,
Thus fondly 'hovers o'er bower and hall,
O'er turret grey, and o'er wood-walk green
Of many a blissful hour the scene.

Alternate scenes of joy and woe,
Ah, take the wanderer's sad farewell !
To you the unbidden tears will flow,
On you will tortur'd memory dwell.

To every early feeling true,
He bids you all a long adieu.

It had evidently been written in haste, and had certainly been composed on the eve of Percival's departure for the Continent, when, though he had the resolution to refrain from visiting the manor-house, he had on his return from the rectory to his own home, paid a last visit to his favourite resort. Having hastily sketched his farewell, he had probably dropped it in the agitated state of his feelings, and it

had been placed by some of the servants in the drawer, with some loose drawings of Eloisa's, which had been executed on that spot. Though tears, which neither could wholly repress, declared what both felt, they spoke not, but Harriet gave the lines into the hand of her friend, and they left the building in silence.

If, in the retirement of the night, the lines and the recollection of their writer disturbed Eloisa's rest, and haunted her fancy, it was concealed within the recesses of her own bosom, for not a word escaped her on the subject. She arose early in the morning, and walked to the rectory, in performance of her promise to Mr. Stanley. Mrs. Stanley had felt hurt at her late neglect, but she saw the anxiety of her young friend to retrieve her error, and cordially forgave her.

Her parting advice was well calculated to counteract the dangerous precepts of Lady Harcourt, but it is to be feared they were too soon obliterated, by the appear-

ance of that lady and her friends, with a magnificent travelling retinue, which called at the manor soon after her return, to convey our heroine from seclusion and from Riversdale.

The incident of the preceding evening, and the interview of the morning, had impressed her countenance with unusual gravity; it soon attracted her Ladyship's attention.

"Pray, my dear," said she, looking archly, "how may you have been employing the time this morning?"

Eloisa answered, that she had been taking leave of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley.

"I thought it was some such pious occupation, by the extreme ruefulness of your countenance," answered her Ladyship, laughing; "but really, I hope you intend to discard this dismal fit very soon, or I shall be tempted to order the carriage back again." Then seeing Eloisa's eyes filling with tears, she added, "Indeed, my dear Miss Riversdale, you must

assume a very different character. Mr. and Mrs. Stanley are very good sort of humdrum kind of people, and their daughter is a very neat well-behaved girl, but in the style of life you are destined to move, their acquaintance can merely be valuable, as they enable you to get through a tedious hour in the country, without absolutely dying of *ennui*."

Observing Eloisa's looks of disapprobation and dejection increase, she tried to soothe and amuse her, and the journey concluded with more cordiality than it began.

CHAP. VI.

“ And e'en when Fashion's brightest arts decoy,
The heart, distrusting, asks if this be joy.”

GOLDSMITH.

FROM the bosom of retirement, from a life of entire seclusion, Eloisa emerged at once into all the gaiety of the world. Her protectress and *chaperon* was well calculated for the task she had undertaken; she assisted her in the regulation of her household, in the furnishing and ornamenting the splendid dwelling prepared for her, and in settling her whole establishment.

The house of Lady Harcourt was the temple of luxury; but Eloisa, who possessed a taste the most correct and fanci-

ful in her own plans, made improvements on her model, and her mansion was soon converted into the most beautiful scene of delight that can be imagined. The paintings, the furniture, and the decorations, were all her own choice, and arranged by her own direction, and the beautiful boudoir that terminated the first suite of apartments, was fitted up at once so splendidly and so tastefully, that Lady Harcourt, on seeing it completed, exclaimed "that she had never beheld any thing so perfectly enchanting;" and that "her house would be the wonder and admiration of the fashionable world."

Elqisa was no enthusiast in music, but as it was on fashion's list of amusements, her concert-room was fitted up in the first style of splendour, and her music-master was regular in his attendance. She had naturally a melodious voice, but the piano-forte was the only instrument she had yet attempted. The harp now became her study, and her wild notes were to be cor-

rected by a singing-master of the first eminence.

The introduction of the fair heiress to the circles of fashion, was attended with all the *eclat* that even Lady Harcourt could desire. Wherever she appeared she excited universal wonder and admiration. The singular simplicity of her air and general costume, the originality of her manner, the striking beauty and grace of her form, her countenance beaming with genius and animation, drew the attention of all. However secretly gratified, no marks of vanity were discernible; the same dignified and graceful vivacity appeared in her deportment, when surrounded by admiring crowds, as when confined to a select circle, and coquetry was equally distant from her heart and her manner.

An enthusiast in literature, particularly poetry, and a professed patroness of the arts, genius and taste combined to attract the literati of the age to her house; and though this was not precisely the plan of

Lady Harcourt, who derived little amusement from intellectual pursuits, still, as it involved Eloisa in expenses, and drew large parties to her mansion, she did not discourage the eagerness she evinced to patronise genius and invention.

Poetry had ever been her cherished delight, but as yet she had possessed few opportunities to indulge it; it always possessed the power to soothe and cheer her spirits, and divert her attention from surrounding objects. When her taste became known and acknowledged, many were the pretenders to this delightful art, who had hitherto been condemned to obscurity, that by her favour were brought forward to public notice. She sought and obtained for them the protection and support of the most distinguished literary characters; proposed and contributed to subscriptions for indigent authors; and received and entertained at her own house, all those whose talents were known and approved.

The Belcour family, as the friends of

Lady Harcourt, were soon numbered among her intimates. Lady Belcour was no uncommon character; all her hopes and wishes were centered in the gay world, and in providing her daughters with suitable marriages. Adelaide, her favourite, was, as Lady Harcourt had represented, very handsome in person; she had received a shewy education, could play, sing and dance, without any of that inconvenient *mauvaise honte*, which prevents an advantageous display of those accomplishments, and ably seconded all her mamma's views for her permanent establishment.

Adelaide's elegance, beauty and sensibility, were never-failing themes with Lady Belcour; and she viewed Eloisa with some degree of alarm, as considering her a formidable rival in the world of fashion: but Eloisa was insensible to her anxiety on the subject—she felt her own superiority to the crowd by whom she was surrounded, and conscious of the power she possessed to indulge her passion for

celebrity, she plunged fearlessly into all those pursuits best calculated, by engrossing her undivided attention, to obliterate from her mind all recollections injurious to her repose.

The career of dissipation is rapid, its fascinations are calculated to delude the imagination, and the enchanted mirror reflects to the dazzled sight only images of happiness. Whirled irresistibly into the centre of fashion, the temper and education of Eloisa were precisely such, as exposed her to the most serious danger from the temptations that on all sides assailed her; and her mind began gradually to assimilate itself to the habits of gay life, till she acquired a decided taste for its amusements.

A leader of the modes, and the arbitress of fashion, the Riversdale hat and cap were soon the order of the day, and the lovely model, from whose taste they derived celebrity, became famed for her inventions in the art. Yet alas! truth must acknow-

ledge, that not from the voice of fame, though its trump daily proclaimed her name to the world through the medium of newspapers and periodical publications, of all kinds, in the language of eulogium, not from the empty adulation of the crowd, was Eloisa formed to find felicity. Nature had designed her for far higher enjoyments, and had bestowed on her a heart calculated only to find real gratification from a life of rationality: but the early loss of Mrs. Lovel, with the misfortune of finding a rival instead of a parent in her step-mother, had contributed, by leaving a mind of great natural powers to its own cultivation, to produce all the consequences that ensued. Innumerable lovers now crowded around her, but the report of her engagement prevented any serious proposals; and their anguish and despair that she was unattainable, were themes that often reached her ear.

Thus passed the first winter, during which she wrote to the Stanleys, accord-

ing to her promise, but the gay life she led prevented her from being very punctual. But though her memory was often treacherous to her old friends at the Rectory, on one subject it was as tenacious as ever. Not all the neglect of Percival, not all the dissipation in which she constantly lived; not the combined powers of poetry, music, and pleasure, could suffice to banish him her remembrance. Since the discovery of the lines in the rustic building, she had felt convinced that her own feelings were reciprocal; and the long silence of St. Edmond had induced her to cherish a secret hope that something might yet arise, to prevent the fulfilment of her forced engagement. No St. Edmond made his appearance, nor did any intelligence respecting him arrive to destroy the illusions that filled her imagination. The winter glided rapidly past—"I am afraid I have neglected the poor Stanleys," thought she, as she was one day reminded of them, ~~by seeing an unanswered letter~~.

of Louisa's among some half forgotten notes in her desk, "but I will make it all up to them when I go to Riversdale in the summer."

That time, however, did not arrive so soon as she expected. Lady Harcourt persuaded her, that she must not leave town till after the birth-day. Immediately afterwards, a tour to the Lakes was projected by Sir Eustace Etherington, a new admirer of Lady Harcourt; they were joined by the Belcours, and Eloisa could not withstand the entreaties of her friends.

On their return, a party to Brighton for the autumn banished all thoughts of Riversdale for that year. From Brighton she accompanied Lady Harcourt to Bath; here she once more met her mother-in-law, who had taken up her residence there: her fortune was too confined for her to live in town, with the splendour she would have chosen, and at Bath she was the idol of the day. Her parasite Miss Danderville resided with her, and both beheld with

surprise the alteration a few months had made in Eloisa.

“ You have done wonders, my dear friend,” said Lady Riversdale, “ but, pray do not suffer her to return to Riversdale, and to those odious Stanleys, or you will have it all to do over again.”

“ Rely on me,” said her gay Ladyship, with a smile, “ she will be a finished character, before she quits my tuition.”

They returned to town in February, and Eloisa was again a subject of general conversation in the higher circles.—Scarcely had she commenced her usual routine of engagements, when a report reached her ear, of the death of St. Edmond; the news came through a mercantile house in the city, with whom the elder St. Edmond had had pecuniary transactions. How did her heart palpitate, when intelligence so interesting to every feeling reached her! Having no recollection of St. Edmond though at first she felt shocked, it could not be a subject of lasting regret, more

particularly, as her heart had long since told her, that freedom from her early engagement, was her first and most anxious wish. In truth, since the poetical fragment, found by Harriet, had met her eyes, Eloisa had felt convinced, that it was only the knowledge of her engagement with St. Edmond, that had separated her from Henry; and the conviction, that she was freed from it without disobeying the will of her father, imparted inconceivable delight. Percival would probably return to England, in the spring, and would find her disengaged. The thought gave a glow to her cheeks, and an additional elasticity to her movements; that rendered her more fascinating than ever; meantime every day, every hour, the love of gaiety and admiration seemed to encrease. Lady Harcourt played, and led on by her, Eloisa was introduced to the fascinations of the gaming table, and in one night returned home a loser of some hundreds to Sir Eustace Etherington. The loss in her estimation,

was trifling, but the triumph she had discovered on the features of Lady Harcourt and Sir Eustace, as she caught by accident a look of communication between them, had disconcerted her, and on reaching her own apartments she felt, as she had lately, more than once done, dissatisfied with her own conduct. Here again, the want of a friend and monitor was to be deplored. Eloisa's disposition was frank, open, and sincere, but no friendly bosom expanded to receive her confidence, and at an age, when youth most needs the guidance of the wise, she was wholly left to herself; when on the following morning, she opened her unsuspecting heart to Lady Harcourt, her compunction was ridiculed, and her uneasiness laughed at.

“Pray, my dear,” said her Ladyship, “is it the reproof of that sage piece of youthful gravity, your guardian, Mr. Percival, that you stand in so much awe of, and has any body been beforehand with me, in the news I intended to bring you

of his approaching arrival, that you are thus alarmed and depressed ?”

“Arrival!” exclaimed Eloisa, her complexion turning from pale to red; and from red to pale in a moment.

“Yes, his arrival,” cried Lady Harcourt, “but, bless me are you really alarmed? or is there,” she added archly “any other latent emotion in this fair bosom, that causes this unusual agitation?” Eloisa started from her seat, and walked to the window, but in a minute she had regained her self-possession, and turning to lady Harcourt, she said “Mr. Percival was one of my earliest friends; surely it is natural to feel surprise and pleasure at his return, after such an absence; but I am not in spirits this morning, and raillery is perhaps peculiarly unseasonable.”

“I own my error,” said her Ladyship, approaching her with every spark of levity and irony banished from her countenance, “I see you are indeed not well, and you know my dear Eloisa, that my spirits are

too apt to run away with my discretion. Come, you shall retire, and compose yourself, and I will be with you early in the evening; of course you will be at Lady Albert's." Eloisa was so anxious to be left alone that she gave a ready assent; her friend left her, and she retired to her dressing room. Percival was then on his return; with what joy, what delight had she looked forward to it, but now that he was actually approaching, she had a thousand fears. "He will find me," thought she "greatly altered," her glass told her that in appearance, at least, the alteration was not to her disadvantage. "But it is only in external circumstances," she added "for my heart is the same— Yes dear Percival, the same, as when, together, in our happy early days, we wandered through the shades of Riversdale." She began, however to reflect, that she had been negligent, in more points than one; her affairs were left wholly in the hands of her agent, who was almost a

stranger to her. Sir William's old faithful servant having died, soon after his master, and his successor had been recommended by Lady Harcourt. When the period of her minority had expired, Mr. Stanley, empowered by Percival, had resigned his guardianship, in his name, and Mr. Emmersley, the new steward, had since transacted all her affairs. Wholly ignorant of business, and confiding in the integrity of those around her, Eloisa had no idea of inspecting accounts. Lady Harcourt had persuaded her, that there could be no necessity to teaze herself on the subject, when she had an agent so competent to the task. Of the Stanleys she had not for a long time heard; she knew the omission rested with herself, and here again she felt culpable and unhappy.

CHAP. VII.

“ Fix’d was her look, and stern her air ;
Back from her shoulders stream’d her hair ;
The locks, that wont her brow to shade,
Star’d up erectly from her head ;
Her figure seem’d to rise more high ;
Her voice, despair’s wild energy
Had given a tone of prophecy.”

SCOTT.

DEJECTED and spiritless Lady Harcourt found Eloisa, when she again made her appearance in the evening ; but aware of the state in which she might probably meet her friend, she had brought an auxiliary in her train, to whom she had confided her fears, and had charged him to exert all his powers to rally the fair Heiress out of the horrors.

This was the elegant and accomplished Earl of Courtville, a young nobleman who had lately attained his title and estates, and celebrated for his wit and talents. Greatly struck with the beauty and genius of Eloisa, he had, by his unbounded admiration, contributed not a little to her celebrity; and now, exerting all his eloquence, he soon induced her to lay aside the intention she had at first declared, of remaining at home that evening, and accompany the party to Lady Albert's. More to avoid entreaty than ~~to~~ gratify herself, (for she could only think of Percival and his near approach) she consented; but once within the vortex of pleasure, she soon became one of its gayest votaries; and ere the evening concluded, she sung, danced, and displayed the wonderful and versatile talents she had received from nature, with all her wonted animation. In one of the pauses of the dance, which she had led off with Lord Courtville, who had, during this evening, been more particular in his

behaviour than she had ever before observed him ; he suddenly turned to speak to a lady near him, and as Eloisa leant against one of the pillars of the ball-room, her ear was struck by the conversation of two gentlemen who were standing apart from the company. She heard one of them say, “ indeed ! I am sorry to hear it.— Lord Avonmore was an excellent, though an eccentric character.” “ Yes,” answered the other, “ and it is the more to be lamented, as the title and estate must pass to a distant branch of the family—a young man, but little known in the world, of the name of Percival.” Eloisa hearing no more, her head grew giddy, and without waiting to apologize to Lord Courtville for her desertion, she hastened to a seat. She was immediately accosted by Mr. Dorian, the brother of Lord Courtville, and a very different character. He was a professed satirist, but clever and entertaining, when his wit did not exceed the bounds of good nature ; his sister,

Lady Augusta Dorian was leaning on his arm.

“Dear, how pale *Miss Riverthdale look-eth!*” lisped out Lady Augusta.

“What can have blanched the rose on her fair cheeks?” said her brother, approaching Eloisa, and finding she was really indisposed, he left his sister with her, and flew for a glass of water.

“You are infinitely delicate dear ~~Miss~~ *Riverthdale*,” said Lady Augusta—“Oh *hereth* Courtville coming, I hope you will be better now.”

Lord Courtville approached, but Eloisa scarcely heard his anxious enquiries; she was vexed and surprised at the speech of his sister, which implied that her Ladyship thought she took an interest in her brother that she was far from feeling; and confused as she was, it yet occurred to her, that her own behaviour must have appeared to give encouragement to his Lordship, which she was far from intending.

Adelaide Belcour came towards them, and hearing Eloisa say that she desired her carriage might be called, she said, "you are ill Miss Riversdale, oh let me go home with you, for I am tired to death of this crowd and bustle—that odious Lady Marmoset is pushing her six ugly daughters into every corner of the room, where there are any gentlemen, in hopes of getting them partners, but it is all in vain, and she has actually fanned herself into a fever with the disappointment.—It will be a serious relief to the world when she has disposed of some of her numerous brood, for really they are to be seen in every public and private party in town."

Mr. Dorian here returned with a glass of water, which Lord Courtville took from him and held to Eloisa's lips. Her recent conviction induced her to take the glass from him with an apology, then declaring she was much better, enquired if the carriage had been ordered.

"It has," answered Dorian, "I heard

it called this moment, but how is it, not ten minutes since you were *Thalia* herself, and lo, ere I could cross the room, I find you assuming the character of her tragic sister—come, confess honestly that your conscience goaded you, when you saw that unfortunate Lady Marmoset, contrasting your animated movement, that drew the gaze of every eye around with the unhappy fate of her own fair progeny.”

“If their destiny appeared so unfortunate to you,” said Eloisa smiling, “why not ameliorate it when it is in your power, by simply leading them out alternately? It is you, not me, who should be the object of Lady Marmoset’s anxiety.”

“Infinitely indebted to you for the proposal,” said he bowing, “but to say the truth, the amusing a fashionable young lady, during two dances, is an undertaking beyond my ability.—I am utterly deficient in the requisite qualifications, strange to tell, though born in the

eighteenth century I am no adept in the science of flirtation—I am so utterly ignorant of the component parts of a lady's *costume*, that I do not even know the technical terms—my memory is so treacherous, that I could not recollect one interesting piece of scandal, to entertain her withal, during the pauses of the dance; and to complete the catalogue of deficiencies I am so prone to contemplate “the human face divine,” where it may be seen, as in such assemblie as this, in all its varieties, that my eyes and attention would be marvellously apt to stray from the face and conversation of my partner.”

“But are dress, scandal, and flirtation the only subjects within the limits of a fashionable young lady's capacity?” said Eloisa, “now there is another, in which you appear to be not at all deficient, that might perhaps supply the places of all those you have enumerated, and render

you at once an eligible partner—the modern invention of *quizzing*.”

“ Oh there you are quite mistaken,” answered Dorian, “ to *quizz*, with effect requires talents far beyond any I can pretend to—I should by no means be equal to a *modern Miss* in all the *essentials*.—At some better opportunity, for your edification, I will explain it in all its branches.”

“ Oh George you are *alwaith* tho’ horribly ~~severe~~,” said Lady Augusta.

The good humour and cheerfulness of Dorian, had in some degree restored Eloisa’s composure, and now her carriage being announced she was handed to it by Lord Courtville, and leaving with him a message for Lady Harcourt, who was engaged at cards, she departed.—But a fresh trial now awaited her, for no sooner were they seated, than Adelaide Belcour exclaimed—oh my dear Miss Riversdale I have learned a piece of news to night that has astonished and delighted me beyond

all description.—Have you heard that Lord Avonmore is dead ?”—

“ Yes,” answered Eloisa, “ but why should it delight you ?”—

“ Because,” replied Adelaide, “ he is succeeded in his title and estate by Henry Percival.”—

“ Do *you* know Mr. Percival then ?” said Eloisa, breathless with surprise.

“ Oh yes very well indeed,” said Adelaide—“ I first saw him at my uncle’s who has a seat near Oxford, and when Percival was at College, he was introduced to us by my cousin Charles, and was constantly of all our parties—what a charming young man he is ! They used to *quiz* me very much about him, indeed I must say, he was always very attentive”—she paused, and Eloisa feeling that she was expected to speak, and fearing what construction might be put on her silence, exerted herself to say—

“ Mr. Percival’s manners are very gentlemanly and elegant.”

“ Yes,” said Adelaide, “ they certainly are, but I own he was very attentive to me at one time, and called on us the very day before he set out on his tour, to take his leave.—Bless me! are you ill again?” she cried, as the sudden reflection of the lamps of a passing carriage, disclosed the paleness of Eloisa’s countenance.

Eloisa answered that it was merely the effect of fatigue, and gladly did she escape from her companion, to her apartment.—Though she totally discredited the hints which Adelaide’s vanity had induced her to give of Percival’s partiality, yet no sleep visited her eyes that night—Percival, his return, his exaltation, filled her mind and drove repose from her. To divert her thoughts on the following morning she rode out early, purposely to enjoy her own reflections uninterruptedly. She knew Lady Harcourt would be with her, if she were at home; for to her she was never denied, and she was just now, inclined to solitude. After a long drive, she

ordered the carriage to stop at a haberdasher's, for some trifling articles that she wished to purchase; on entering the shop she was struck by the appearance of a young woman, who had often served her, and whom she had noticed as being singularly genteel in her manners and appearance; the girl was in great distress, looked pale and ill, and seemed quite unequal to the duties of her situation. She however attended to the request of Eloisa, and had just reached the articles she required, when she suddenly gave an elastic spring from behind the counter, and seizing the arm of a gentleman who was passing through the shop, and in whom Eloisa immediately recognised a medical man who was in the habit of attending her; and unrestrained by the presence of strangers, exclaimed—

“ Oh Sir, how is she? will she live?”

“ She is very ill indeed,” he answered, “ and I fear in great danger, but it is possible certainly that she may do well.”

The good-natured girl could hear no

more, but again lost all command of her feelings and returned to Eloisa drowned in tears. Ever compassionate and feeling the latter could not resist saying—

“ Pray do not think me impertinent, if I say that your grief interests me ; it is not, I hope, the danger of a near relation that you so feelingly lament ?”

“ Oh no, ma'am,” she answered, “ she is almost a stranger.”

As she spoke, the mistress of the shop, who had heard what passed, advanced saying—

“ It is a young lady, ma'am, that lodges here ; she is a foreigner, speaks but little English, and has no friends. She has only lodged here a few weeks, and my daughter has taken such a fancy to her, that if she dies I think she will break her heart : but it may be all for the best, poor thing ! for I believe she has neither money nor friends.”

“ Good heavens ! and in a foreign coun-

try—how dreadful!” said Eloisa; “who then recommended her to you?”

“Nobody, madam,” answered Mrs. Lindley, “she has worked for the shop for some time, and was then in lodgings just by; but lately she begged us to let her have one of our attic, and as Maria was so taken with her, and we had one to spare, we received her, and she supported herself by working; she was always delicate, and a week ago she was seized with this violent fever, but it is not at all infectious the doctor says.”

“Oh, she is so good and so beautiful,” said the good-natured Maria.

“I wish I knew how I could be of service to her,” said Eloisa. “If her situation is so destitute, she must need pecuniary assistance;” and taking a note from her purse, she said, “pray make use of this for her, and when she is better perhaps she will suffer me to see her, and suggest some future plan that may be of use to her.”

“ Oh see her now, ma'am,” said Maria, and in her eagerness she put her hand on Eloisa's arm.

“ I shall perhaps distress her,” said Eloisa, “ ill as she is.”

“ Oh do see her,” said Maria, “ you have only to look at her to be interested for her.”

Always hurried away by her feelings, and greatly interested by what she heard, Eloisa followed up three pair of stairs to a small room, where seated on the bed, with a long wrapping gown thrown loosely round her, she beheld the object of her visit, and a more extraordinary appearance Eloisa had never beheld. In a violent paroxysm of fever she had risen and attempted to dress herself, but exhausted by the effort had been obliged to desist, and with her head resting on her emaciated hand, sat motionless.

Though pallid, and reduced by illness, her beauty was still exquisite : her complexion was of the most dazzling white-

ness, and her eyes, naturally brilliant, were rendered by delirium almost too dazzling to contemplate; her cap had fallen off, and her long jet black hair had fallen from its confinement, and hung dishevelled over her slender figure. She only noticed the entrance of her visitors, at first, by a wild stare, and then convulsively shuddering, uttered, in good Italian, an exclamation of despair in a voice so sweet, but mournful, that Eloisa could not restrain her tears. In a moment, the interesting stranger seemed to grow more collected. Looking with a fixed stare at Eloisa, and darting her brilliant eyes over her person—

“Who is it?” said she in a half whisper to Maria, “is it an angel? and does she come to bring peace to Rosalba? Hush, hush, let me sing to her.”

Then suddenly, in tones of the sweetest melody, but wildly and incoherently, she sang a line of an Italian air, but overcome with the effort, sunk again on the bed. Eloisa was too much shocked to remain an

inactive spectator ; she ordered a nurse to be provided at her own expense, and from that time continued regularly to visit the beautiful foreigner, who after a severe struggle with her disorder at length began to recover.

CHAP. VIII.

THE ITALIAN.

IT perhaps reflected more credit on the benevolence than the prudence of Eloisa, that the interesting foreigner soon became a resident in her family, though she remained as complete a stranger to her history, as at the first moment of their acquaintance.

“ I might certainly impose on you a feigned narrative,” said the fascinating Italian, “ but my heart disdains the subterfuge. That I am a native of Italy my language declares, but my sad story, as well as my real name, must remain concealed. To the few to whom I must necessarily be known, let me still be the

Signora Violetti, but to you let me be only *Rosalba*. Employ me as you please, let me be in any way serviceable to you, so that I can but evince the gratitude with which my whole soul is filled ; and above all, let me but be concealed as much as possible from the eye of the world—let me only live to my benefactress, and to her may a gracious providence enable me to impart some small portion of the comfort, she has given to me and my sorrows.”

Such a speech was well calculated to interest the susceptible and enthusiastic feelings of *Eloisa* ; and to *Rosalba* she became soon so completely attached, that she longed to be always in her society. The splendid abilities of the fair Italian fascinated her imagination : when she sung or touched the instrument, *Eloisa* scarcely thought her an inhabitant of the earth. She drew and painted inimitably, and she had the most refined taste for literature in general ; but what principally excited the wonder and admiration of *Eloisa*, was her

rare and brilliant talents as an *improvisatrice*; which she often exercised in their few hours of retirement, to amuse her youthful patroness.

“ Ah,” said she, “ how do the surprise and delight you express, remind me of days that are passed, days never to be forgotten, when crowds have followed my steps, and an assembled multitude have hailed me with applause.—‘How sweet yet mournful to the soul’ is the recollection !”

Then drawing the harp to her, she touched the strings with magic finger, while she warbled an impromptu, the child of her singular genius.

Lady Harcourt, the general repository of our misguided heroine’s secrets, was the only being to whom *Rosalba*, and *Eloisa*’s adoption of her Italian favourite, were known. Often did her Ladyship attempt to draw out the beautiful foreigner to public notice; but her solicitations, though she was strenuously joined by *Eloisa*, were always gently, but firmly refused by the

mysterious Rosalba, who, on these occasions, displayed so much repugnance, and ever shrunk with such horror from the idea of being presented to the world, that Eloisa, when she became conscious of her utter dislike to the proposal, would never suffer it to be repeated; and often from the crowded rout and noisy assembly, from the opera, the ball and the play, would she return fatigued and dispirited, to regain all her gaiety and animation, to her beautiful boudoir, and the interesting Rosalba.

The latter always seemed to await her return with impatience; and though her nocturnal revels frequently detained her, till the unseasonable hour would have discouraged any other expectant, the indefatigable Rosalba had never retired, but regularly awaited her arrival, with some new or varied amusement to beguile the time, till she chose to retire to rest.

Days and weeks passed on, and yet Percival approached not. The newspapers had long since announced the accession of

Henry Percival, Esq. to the ancient titles and large estates of the late Earl of Avonmore, yet was he never seen or known but by name in the great world. Eloisa's mortification and surprise became daily greater, and to drive the subject from her thoughts she became more gay and dissipated than ever; and the never-ceasing exertions of Rosalba were more necessary than before, to preserve her from the weariness and discontent brought on by her own reflexions.

Alone in her boudoir, Miss Riversdale was one morning taking a late breakfast, when the following note was delivered to her :

“ Mr. Stanley is commissioned by his friend Lord Avonmore to wait on Miss Riversdale, whenever she is disengaged, and will honour him with an interview.”

She returned an immediate answer, that she was disengaged the whole of that, and the following morning; and in an hour afterwards Mr. Stanley was announced. On his entrance, Eloisa would have flown

to meet him with all her former affectionate eagerness, in spite of the self-reproving monitor, which told her how cruelly she had neglected her early friends ; but she was checked by the grave, composed and distant manner with which he approached her. Shocked, and at once discouraged, she drew back, and Mr. Stanley being seated, entered immediately on his business.

“ Lord Avonmore,” he said, had commissioned him to wait on Miss Riversdale, with an apology for having himself omitted paying his respects to her, on his return to England ; his Lordship having been so completely confined to his country seat, first by illness, and since his recovery by indispensable business relative to his late acquisitions, that it had been hitherto impossible for him to find time to visit the metropolis.

“ Nor will he probably,” added Mr. Stanley, “ have it in his power, shortly, to attend to any thing unconnected with

his own immediate concerns. The affairs of his late relation are left in such a confused and complicated state, that it will be long before even his judgment and perseverance can arrange them sufficiently, to enable him to enjoy the privileges his recently acquired rank and fortune confer, with comfort to himself."

Eloisa tried to say, that she was sorry to hear of Lord Avonmore's ill health, she would have enquired if he were quite recovered, but she felt she could not utter a word ; and while her colour varied and her speech faltered with emotion, she asked after Mrs. Stanley and Louisa. Mr. Stanley briefly answered that they were both well, and with the air of one hurt by the neglect of a once esteemed friend, but disdaining any allusion to it, he again reverted to Lord Avonmore.

"His Lordship," he continued, "has also delegated to me another commission, which, as he has resigned the office of guardian, can only be excused, by the in-

terest and regard he will of course ever feel for a daughter of Sir William Riversdale. You are perhaps aware," he added, that I allude to Mr. St. Edmond." He paused; and Eloisa, who on this subject could speak with composure, immediately related all she had heard concerning him.

"I am glad," said Mr. Stanley, "that the intelligence I have to impart has in some degree preceded me. The report is undoubtedly correct. Influenced by motives of friendship, Mr. Percival made a point of seeking Mr. St. Edmond at Naples, but he had left that city some time before my friend reached it, and the news of his death, well authenticated, had arrived only a few days preceding. Mr. Percival then sought out an intimate friend of St. Edmond's, an amiable but eccentric character, the Chevalier Morlini, with whom he has formed a friendship that promises to be permanent, and from him learned all the particulars of his illness and death. The Chevalier had a desire to see England, and

when my friend was recalled by the decease of Lord Avonmore, accepted his invitation to accompany him, and is now at Avonmore Castle."

Having executed his commission, after a few more observations Mr. Stanley, with the same air of gravity and distance, arose to depart; but Eloisa, awakened at once from the lethargy in which she had been lulled, by those powerful mental opiates fashion and dissipation, suddenly springing forward, exclaimed—

"Oh do not look so—but tell me, have you then, have Mrs. Stanley and Louisa quite given me up?"

"Is it Miss Riversdale who asks that question?" he answered, "have I, have Mrs. Stanley and Louisa ever neglected our early and faithful friends?"

"Oh I feel it, I feel you are just," cried Eloisa; "I know I have been wrong, very wrong; but Oh, Mr. Stanley——"

As she uttered these words the door was suddenly opened, and Lady Harcourt gaily

ran in without appearing to observe Mr. Stanley, she exclaimed.—“ My dear Eloisa, I am dying to see you.—Here’s Courtville in perfect despair, and I’ve engaged him to meet me here presently to—but good Heaven! what can be the matter?” Then looking at Mr. Stanley, as if seeing him for the first time,—“ How thoughtless I am! I do believe you are engaged, and here is Courtville coming up stairs—well it can’t be helped now, I told him you were at home.”

Mr. Stanley perceiving that all chance of a longer interview with Eloisa was over, and mortified to bear to Lord Avonmore such a confirmation of the reports which were circulated in all directions, that Lord Courtville was an accepted lover of Miss Riversdale, with the same formality of manner, with which he had approached her, took his leave. Lady Harcourt spoke on the subject as she generally did, with the utmost ridicule, and rallied Eloisa unmercifully on her tearful aspect—indeed

the latter was inclined to think that Mr. Stanley had treated her with unmerited severity, and when no longer softened by his presence, ceased to regret the interruption of her Ladyship.

All her hopes and fears respecting Percival, were now finally terminated; he knew from indisputable authority, sooner even than herself, that she was freed from her early engagement, and yet it was evident that he avoided her. Some subsequent attachment had obliterated her from his heart, for, that she once reigned unrivalled there, a thousand proofs, now well remembered, though unnoticed in their early days, added to the still cherished lines in the grotto convinced her. "But no longer shall they be preserved," thought she—"No, for ever will I banish from my bosom this humiliating preference.—Ah how happy am I in having confined the knowledge of its existence to my own breast." She knew not that the penetrating Lady Harcourt had long since discovered her

secret ; but the real character of that lady was far too well concealed to be read by the inexperienced Eloisa.—And now, with greater avidity than ever, did she plunge into all the most expensive and dissipated pleasures of the metropolis.

Lady Harcourt seeing her more than usually depressed one day, when even the never ceasing exertions of Rosalba had not availed to rouse her, prevailed on her, to accompany her party to the theatre before their other evening engagement, and glad to escape from herself, Eloisa consented. The sprightliness of the gay Marchioness had, during the evening, its wonted effect on the mind of Eloisa—her individual sorrows were forgotten and she was again the fairy goddess, whose magic illumined all the scene around.

The theatre was crowded, and the Marchionesse's box was, as usual, the resort of the beau-monde. The Duke of Dorland, Lord Courtville, Sir Eustace Etherington, with several officers, were among the at-

tendant satellites that hovered within the orbit of the two beautiful planets. Miss Riversdale never looked more lovely, and to her was the palm of beauty generally given. The Marchioness became tired before the play was over and proposed returning. Eloisa readily acquiesced, and as she was conducted between the Duke and Lord Courtville through the lobby, the figure of a gentleman in black, leaning on the arm of another struck her view; her heart beat quickly, and ere the stranger turned round, she had recognised the well known form of Henry Percival, now Lord Avonmore. He evidently knew her—a hectic colour crossed his cheeks, and animated for a moment his melancholy eyes, but a distant bow only betrayed his recollection, though he lingered on the spot where he had beheld her, till the intervening crowd concealed her from his view.

“Those are two extremely beautiful women,” said his companion, “do you know them?”

"One of them," he replied in a faltering voice, "is the Marchioness of Harcourt."

"Then," exclaimed his friend, "the other must be the famous Miss Riversdale, for I have heard they are inseparable."

"Famous! why famous?" asked Lord Avonmore, in the quick tone of interest.

"Why," answered he, laughing, "for being very young, very rich, very handsome, and for having, as is I believe no uncommon case, more beauty than prudence."

Henry heaved a deep and agonized sigh, and mentally exclaiming, "can this be the once artless amiable Eloisa?" He made a hasty excuse to his friend, threw himself into his chariot, and returned home in a state of mind, far from enviable.

The emotion of Eloisa at sight of Lord Avonmore, had not escaped the penetration of Lady Harcourt, and her Ladyship availed herself of the opportunity to speak on the subject. "Your secret my dear," said she, "has long been known to

me, for to tell you the truth, the human heart is a mystery in which I am pretty well versed, and I only regret that the affection of such a mind as yours should be bestowed unworthily, for that of course they must be, when they are unreturned. As to Lord Avonmore, I have heard hints of some attachment he has formed, but I am ignorant of particulars, he evidently seems to avoid you, for even when so near you last night, he appeared glad to escape through the crowd. Oh he is an ungracious wight! Let us think of him no more, but rather hope a far more brilliant establishment awaits you, for sure I am, that Lord Courtville adores you, and I verily believe that the least encouragement would bring the Duke of Dorland to your feet."

"Very possibly," answered Eloisa, "but as I never intend to give him any, it will be some time probably before I see him there."

"Oh thou worthy pupil of the Stan-

leys!" cried Lady Harcourt, "reject a Duke! nay then I must give you up as incorrigible."

"Is it possible then," said Eloisa, indignantly, "that you can imagine the title would have any weight with me?"

"My dear Eloisa," said Lady Harcourt, "you are still an infant in the world, or you would not ask the question, for, with nine-tenths of our sex, a Ducal coronet would decide the business at once.—Certainly it might be placed on wiser heads than that of his Grace of Dorland, but even that circumstance is not without its conveniencies."

"No advantages can possibly recompense a woman of sense and feeling, for the consciousness of mental deficiency in a husband," said Eloisa.

"Well, we will not contest that point," said Lady Harcourt, but I must acknowledge, the acceptance of rank, fashion, riches—and the Duke of Dorland ap-

pears to me very preferable to wasting your youth and beauty, in vainly regretting the cold-hearted Percival."

Eloisa made no reply, she felt hurt and indignant, and she parted from Lady Harcourt, with far less cordiality than usual.

CHAP. IX.

“ Fair was her rounded arm, as o'er
The strings her fingers flew ;

* * * * *

At length upon the harp with glee
Mingled with arch simplicity,
A soft, yet lively, air she sung.”

SCOTT.

AFTER the accidental encounter in the theatre, Eloisa for some time, saw no more of Lord Avonmore in public ; but little did she conceive the anguish she had caused him—little did she imagine, that on hearing the death of St. Edmond, he had admitted hopes for himself, and on being recalled by Lord Avonmore’s death,

had actually returned to England with a resolution to seek her immediately, and at once offer her his hand, title, and fortune.—His first interview with Mr. Stanley wrought a change in his intentions.

“ Miss Riversdale has never visited the manor since your departure, she resides wholly in town, Bath, at Brighton, &c.—We seldom hear of her but through the medium of the public prints, which are lavish in praise of her beauty and accomplishments, and speak of the fair Heiress as one of the first on the list of fashionable belles.—The Marchioness of Harcourt is her chosen friend, and it is reported that the Earl of Courtville is about to lay a recently acquired coronet at her feet.”—So say the newspapers of the day, and so said Mr. Stanley.

Percival was thunder struck, and all his fondly cherished hopes were at once annihilated. He was rigid in his ideas of propriety, and he conceived a turn for domestic comfort, indispensable in a wife. He

made more minute enquiries of a friend, resident in the great world, who visited him at the country seat of the late Lord Avonmore, now become his own—all the intelligence communicated by Mr. Stanley was confirmed, with this addition, that it was believed Miss Riversdale had imbibed, from Lady Harcourt a love of play, at which it was said she had already contracted immense debts.

“ Dreadful!” cried Henry, “ Oh dreadful! could I ever have believe it possible?”

There was one singular coincidence in the fate of Lord Avonmore and Miss Riversdale.—The chosen friend and companion of each, was a native of the same country.

The Chevalier Morlini, to whom he had become known in Italy, in the course of his enquiries after St. Edmond; had attached himself to Lord Avonmore, with a fervour and perseverance that called forth all the gratitude and affection inherent in the nature of Percival. The Chevalier

was singularly interesting and elegant in his manner—his person was handsome, but emaciated by ill health and mental disquietude—his understanding was of the first order, his talents were brilliant, his learning profound, and his conversation, at all times, exactly calculated to make the heart forget its sorrows.

Alive to all the finer feelings, and ever attracted by sympathy and affection, Lord Avonmore found in the society of the Chevalier a constant resource against himself. The duties of his station called him at length to town—and the night Eloisa encountered him at the theatre, was the first time of his appearing in public—he then saw her surrounded by the gay and the dissipated, apparently as gay and dissipated as they, lending a willing ear to the fops who attended her, and solicitous only for admiration. Her person was certainly more beautiful than ever, but where was that naivete of manners, that enchanting simplicity that had once endeared her to

him ?—gone !—left in the dear shades of Riversdale.

Sir Edward Erville, an amiable young Baronet, and long since an intimate college companion of Percival's, was amongst the first to hail Lord Avonmore's arrival in the beau-monde, and to congratulate him on his late acquired title and estate. Lord Avonmore introduced him to the Chevalier, and the three became soon almost inseparable.

In order to dissipate the melancholy, so evident in the appearance of Lord Avonmore, which he persisted in attributing to the remains of indisposition.—Sir Edward persuaded him every evening, to visit some of the different places of public amusement.

Lord Avonmore and the Chevalier, had one day dined with Sir Edward in Grosvenor-street, when, as they were taking their coffee, the Baronet suddenly looking at his watch, exclaimed—"how goes the time ?—for you must know I have an en-

gement for this evening, which I consider too great a treat to forfeit voluntarily. —Come you shall both accompany me, and witness the musical powers of one of the first of our fashionable beauties.”

The languid smile, that beamed over the features of Lord Avonmore, betrayed little curiosity on the subject, but the Chevalier, who was anxious to become as well acquainted with the manners and customs of the English, as he already was with their language, which he spoke correctly, appearing desirous to be of the party, his Lordship with the same indifference that now generally accompanied his actions, made no opposition, and the carriage being ordered, they were no sooner seated in it than Sir Edward cried—“ It occurs to me Avonmore, that you, at least, can need no introduction to the fair lady, whose mansion we are preparing to visit—surely, if I recollect right, Miss Riversdale is the daughter or niece of your old friend Sir William.”

“Miss Riversdale! is it to her house you are going?” exclaimed Lord Avonmore; but the gloom of night concealed the agitation of his countenance, and the elaborate description into which Sir Edward was immediately led, of the splendour of ‘her fairy palace,’ as he called it, the refined taste displayed in its ornaments, and the varied talents of its fair possessor, which drew crowds of literati to her house, gave Henry time to recover himself, and to deliberate on his conduct. He certainly felt a strong degree of curiosity, to behold Eloisa in the zenith of those attractions, which the great world seemed so powerfully to acknowledge.

“And why,” said he mentally, “should I scruple to go, introduced by my friend Sir Edward Erville? No, of me she has doubtless long ceased to think, but as the childish companion of her girlish sports, if indeed the conjecture of Stanley, that she did once feel more, were correct.”

The carriage stopped while Lord Avon-

more was yet plunged in deep thought, and in a few minutes he found himself in the first splendid suite of rooms, leading to those where the deity of the sports presided.

“ ‘This indeed,’ said the Chevalier, “ may truly be called the region of taste ;” and he looked around the magnificent apartments, decorated with every ornament the most luxurious fancy could devise.

“ I beseech you not to stand surveying the rooms,” said the Baronet, “ when the lovely possessor claims all your attention.” And he led the way to a magnificent *boudoir*, fitted up in a style so singular and beautiful, that it excited universal admiration.

Here, reclining on a splendid ottoman, habited in a manner at once the most simple and elegant, they found the youthful genius of the revels. Morlini seemed lost in admiration, but not one word escaped the lips of Lord Avonmore. He looked around him in mute agony, and contem-

plated, with anxious curiosity, the splendour and luxury that marked the dwelling of her, he had so long and fondly adored.

“ Well,” said Sir Edward, “ have I not performed my promise ?”

“ You have truly,” said the Chevalier ; “ and which most to admire I know not, the enchanted palace or its exquisitely beautiful possessor ; and yet she does not, I think, look happy.”

“ Not happy !” exclaimed Lord Avonmore, for the first time unclosing his lips ; “ is she not happy ?”

“ Why that,” said Sir Edward, “ seems a paradox to the world in general, that with every requisite to charm and to ensure felicity, it would seem that she herself had failed to attain it ; for notwithstanding her extreme gaiety, and a vivacity that almost exceeds the bounds of prudence, a dreadful depression frequently appears in her countenance, and the natural brilliancy of her eyes is dimmed with the tear of concealed woe. ‘ The human

face divine' has always been my favourite study, and I cannot help thinking that I have some small skill in physiognomy.—Now the countenance of Miss Riversdale, though it displays a disposition playful and gay in the extreme, is subject to those sudden changes which betray latent sorrow, and from the animation and sensibility she discovers, I am strongly led to believe that it springs from the heart.”

“The heart! does it proceed from the heart?” said Henry mentally; “then may she yet be my own Eloisa.” And he heaved a sigh of deep anxiety, which reached the ear of Sir Edward, and gave the first vague suspicion of its cause.

The meditated introduction of the young Baronet's friends, was of necessity for some time prevented, by the crowd that thronged around the fair genius of the revels. At length there was suddenly a general move, and Eloisa, led between Lord Courtville and the Duke of Dorland, took her place at the harp. Her graceful form, habited

with a simplicity that rendered her *costume* always singular, though by all the *great* and *little* fashionables unsuccessfully imitated, never appeared to greater advantage than on this night.

To her own natural taste for music, she had lately added great science. Under the tuition of Rosalba, she had rapidly acquired all the Italian style and execution. Her voice was uncommonly melodious, it reached the hearts of her auditors. Unconscious of whom they consisted, she sung an Italian air in a style so exquisite, that every eye and ear was entranced in wonder and delight. Some fine pieces followed, after which, she sung alone a lively strain, the words of which had been originally composed by Rosalba in her native language, and by Eloisa were translated into English.

Her figure, as she gracefully touched the instrument, was the finest model for the statuary, and her fine features beamed with intelligence. During the time she

sung, the Chevalier, who from the first moment he beheld her had contemplated her with intense earnestness, seemed rivetted to the spot ; his eyes were fixed on her face, his own was pale with emotion, and when she ceased singing he still stood in silent gaze. The motion now made by Sir Edward to approach Miss Riversdale aroused him ; and as she was in the act of descending from the elevated seat where she had performed, she first became conscious that *he*, whom she least expected to see, was amongst her auditors. Surprise, anxiety, gratified pride, conscious triumph, all assailed her at once ; her varying colour bore testimony to her feelings, and that Miss Riversdale was ill from the heat of the rooms, and the exertion of singing, was echoed from every mouth.

Her late acquaintance with the world had, however, taught her presence of mind sufficient to recover very soon her self-possession. A graceful but silent reception was all the recognition she betrayed of

Lord Avonmore, whose distant, though respectful bow, chilled the warm heart of Eloisa.

“But he shall not perceive his triumph,” thought she; and calling to Lord Courtville, she proposed dancing. Instantly the folding doors of the ball-room unclosed. Led by the enlivening strains from the orchestra, she gave her hand to her noble lover, and the company following her example, were soon arranged.—Her elastic motion, her graceful form still drew every eye; that of the Chevalier incessantly pursued her, and he seemed with regret to accompany Lord Avonmore when he proposed retiring.

“Till to-night,” said he when they were seated in the carriage, “I never pitied St. Edmond.”

“Can you pity any man the loss of a fashionable wife?” asked Lord Avonmore.

“I pity him,” said Morlini, “the loss of so much genius and talents, for that she possesses these in a superior degree,

every word, every look of Miss Riversdale declares."

"How dreadful then," said Lord Avonmore, "that genius and talents should be so miserably perverted. Of what value are either at a gaming table?"

"But might not the early marriage which Sir William had projected, have prevented these melancholy consequences?" asked the Chevalier.

To divert the thoughts and conversation of Lord Avonmore from a subject that he plainly saw distressed him, Sir Edward asked some questions relative to St. Edmond.

"An erroneous and too relaxed system of education, co-operating with a singular turn of mind, rendered him eccentric," said Morlini, "but I think I may add, that he had a heart formed for friendship and the relative affections."

"You were partial to St. Edmond, Morlini," said Lord Avonmore.

"So partial," he answered, "that I was

too blind to his foibles, to be able to delineate his character accurately."

If the Chevalier had been charmed and surprised by the splendid attractions of Eloisa, she had been no less struck by his singularly interesting manner and appearance. Whenever her eyes had been turned towards him, they had met his fixed on her countenance with such intense earnestness, that she had been compelled to turn from the searching gaze with which he seemed to contemplate her. It was not the glance of admiration, but rather the anxious look of interest and inquiry; and once, when Sir Edward had purposely conducted him towards her, and she addressed him in Italian, in which she had accustomed herself to converse with Rosalba, some powerful emotion seemed almost to convulse his features. Sir Edward smiled.

"The Chevalier," said he, "is surprised to hear pure Italian spoken in London."

"Oh pardon me," he answered quickly,

“ have I not this evening had sufficient demonstration, that no acquirements are unattainable by this nation?” and he bowed gracefully to Eloisa.

“ I have little merit,” said she, “ in knowing Italian. I was taught it from a child, and I am in the constant habit of conversing intimately with a native of Florence.”

“ But you have not visited Italy I think Miss Riversdale,” said Sir Edward.

“ No,” she answered ; “ but it was made a point of in education, from a then existing probability, that my destiny might conduct me there.”

As she uttered these words the brilliant dark eyes of the Chevalier met hers, and probably the instant suffusion that illuminated his countenance, and the emotion that shook his frame, and communicated a portion of the same feeling to Eloisa, was caused by the sudden recollection of his friend, the lost St. Edmond. His extraordinary look, and visible agitation, was

strongly impressed on the memory of Eloisa, and after the company had retired, her thoughts long dwelt on the subject.

Rosalba was reading alone in the *boudoir* when Eloisa joined her, and related how much she had been surprised and interested by the Chevalier. She did not observe Rosalba while she spoke, but as she concluded she was struck with wonder at seeing she had dropped her book, risen from her seat, and with a wild stare and folded arms stood motionless. A moment's silence ensued; it was broken by Rosalba—in a hollow voice she exclaimed;

“Great God! Morlini in England!”

Her eyes seemed for a moment to emit fire, and again she stood the breathless image of insanity. Eloisa was seriously alarmed. Never since their first awful meeting, when under the melancholy dominion of delirium, had she beheld her thus agitated.

“My dear Rosalba!” she exclaimed; but Rosalba withdrew from the hand she

extended, and seizing a light, walked slowly out of the room. Too uneasy to retire without again seeing her, Eloisa determined to visit her apartment before she retired to rest ; but she was informed by her own attendant, that the Signora had gone instantly to bed, and was already in a deep sleep.

On the following morning, no traces of the emotion of the evening appeared on the countenance of Rosalba—her wonted tranquillity seemed restored. Not a word in allusion to the cause of her recent agitation escaped her lips ; and Eloisa, with her natural delicacy and consideration, judging of her wishes from her silence, forbore scrupulously to recur to the subject, or to mention Lord Avonmore or his foreign friend again, to the more than ever mysterious Rosalba.

CHAP. X.

“ That lonely dwelling stood among the hills,
By a grey mountain stream ; just elevate
Above the winter torrents did it stand
Upon a craggy bank.”

SOUTHEY.

NOT all the native strength of mind Lord Avonmore possessed, not all his acquired philosophy, could secure him undisturbed repose, after his interview with Eloisa in her own mansion. Her image haunted his slumbers, and his thoughts dwelt with anxiety on the subject. The result of his meditations, was a resolution to watch over her welfare with the disinterested fervour of a friend.

“ She is hastening,” thought he, “ into the very vortex of ruin, and no friendly

hand is extended to save her ; but, though she is lost to me for ever, mine shall invisibly guard her from certain evil. I will even constrain myself to reside chiefly in scenes I detest, that I may not be prevented by distance from flying to her suceour."

In consequence of this resolution he remained in town, and even forced himself into parties and places, where she was the only magnet that attracted him. But though frequently in her vicinity he seldom approached her, and as she was constantly surrounded by a crowd, no opportunity was likely to occur for more than the distant compliments of recognition, as fashionable acquaintance.

It would seem as though the penetration of Morlini had discovered the secret thoughts the hidden feelings of his friend; for after the first undesigned interview with Miss Riversdale, the Chevalier invariably promoted their attendance at every party where they were likely to meet her; he seemed to have a singular pleasure in

contemplating her countenance, and listening to her conversation, and his eyes were, in general, solely employed in deep and alternate observation of her and Lord Avonmore.

As they were one morning at breakfast, after an evening during which Eloisa had appeared with uncommon brilliancy, in a large and crowded party, she became the subject of conversation between Morlini and Sir Edward Erville; the former was warm in his panegyric. Sir Edward smiled at the fervour of his expressions.

“One would almost think you a lover,” said he, “and that our English beauty had taken your heart captive.”

“No,” said Morlini, “were I indeed the lover of Miss Riversdale, I should not be thus open in her praise. ’Tis not for me to aspire to her favour, even were my heart free to be enthralled; but I bear about me a talisman, of power sufficient to guard me for ever from female attraction, and it is, and ever will be my firm opin

ion, that once only in the life of man, is he destined to be really and truly a lover."

"You are an enthusiast, Morlini," said Lord Avonmore, faintly smiling.

"On that subject I am," said the Chevalier, "but remember my enthusiasm is confirmed by experience. An early and indelible impression stamped the destiny of my life, and gave me to the world a forlorn wanderer, had not your highly prized friendship rescued me from the state of desolation in which you found me, and restored me to society and myself."

"No more of this," said Lord Avonmore, "it is painful. Let us order the horses."

He rang the bell, and Morlini left the room.

"It is strange," said his Lordship, "that with all his candour and openness of disposition, there is yet a mystery about him that I can never fathom."

"Were you not acquainted with his connexions abroad?" asked Sir Edward.

“ No : there was a romantic singularity in my introduction to him, which I wonder I have never before been led to mention to you.” His Lordship paused a moment, and then in a voice not wholly free from emotion he added : “ You know, I believe, that is, you have heard, that my regard for Sir William Riversdale’s memory induced me to feel much interested for Mr. St. Edmond. I went to Florence, almost purposely to make inquiries concerning him. There, I found a report of his death prevailed, and with it a rumour of his strong attachment to the daughter of a noble Florentine ; but he had quitted the city to travel some time before, and it was said had died of a pulmonary complaint, in some obscure village at the feet of the Appenines.

“ I was, however, referred for particulars to his most intimate friend, the Chevalier Morlini, who I was told resided near the spot. Thither I directed my steps, to a region so wild and romantic, that to be-

lieve it inhabited by rational beings, required also almost a belief in romance itself. At the village to which I had been directed, I learned that a person of singular and recluse habits, calling himself Morlini, resided in a lonely habitation near one of the most dangerous passes of the Appennines, and this wild dwelling I accordingly explored. The approach to it was guarded by rugged rocks, but some shepherds were my guides, and I had at length the satisfaction to find myself in the presence of the person I sought.

In a solitary cabin, amidst rocks and precipices, and close by a mountain torrent, isolated from all society, I found Morlini. He received me with surprise, but with courtesy, gave me unequivocal proofs that St. Edmond was indeed no more, and after entertaining me as hospitably as his retirement would permit, proposed voluntarily to guide me on my return, a nearer and safer way over the mountains. I was, however, destined to

trespass still farther on his hospitality. A cold caught during my journey, increased to a fever, and I was detained an invalid under his roof nearly three weeks.

“Constant association during this period produced intimacy, and I ventured to reprobate his secluded habits, and to propose to him a journey with me to England, which I at length effected; but with regard to his own situation and connexions, he has ever preserved the most inviolable silence. At Florence he was spoken of as a man of great talents and strict probity, and such I have found him.”

“And this is all you know of him,” said Sir Edward.

“The whole,” said Lord Avonmore; “and what he said this morning was more than I ever before heard him utter, respecting himself.”

The re-entrance of the Chevalier here terminated the conversation.

It was just at this period that Eboisa received a letter from her cousin, Harriet

Worthington, with whom, amidst all her dissipation, she had kept up an occasional correspondence, informing her, that it was at length her determination to accept her often repeated invitation, and spend a part of the winter in town with her.

Harriet had lost her father a few months after the death of Sir William Riversdale, and from that time had resided with an elderly female relation ; but the period of her minority being expired, she was now about to take possession of her paternal inheritance, and settle herself at Worthington Hall, previous to which she had resolved to indulge herself with a visit to her early friend and companion.

That Harriet's favourite propensities, imbibed by habit and education, remained unaltered, her letter plainly evinced ; she spoke with delight of the plan of life she intended to adopt ; said she had purchased a famous pack of hounds, and intended to have the finest stud in the country ; but as she still dearly loved her cousin, though

their habits and pursuits were so different, she could not be satisfied till she had visited her.

“ ‘Though you have,’ she added, ‘so sadly neglected all your old country friends, you are not forgotten by them, at least I can answer for myself, and think it will be performing a good action to go to town on purpose to remind you of them. I conclude you will be shocked at my rusticity, and perhaps horribly ashamed of me, but as I have no particular desire to be exhibited in the beau-monde, you need not be annoyed with me in public. Only let me have a little of your society at home, let us talk over past happy days, and enjoy over again our childish sports, and I shall return with redoubled delight to the only scenes in which I can ever find content.’ ”

“ For heaven’s sake, my dear,” said Lady Harcourt, when Eloisa read the letter to her “ what will you do with the vulgar hoyden ? I fear you will find her a terrible annoyance.”

“ Oh, do not speak so unjustly of her,” said Eloisa, “ she has the best and most innocent of hearts ; her eccentricities of manner are the consequences of education, and can never render her less dear to those who have loved her from childhood.”

“ Well,” said Lady Harcourt, “ all that may be very good, and very correct, and very *Stanleyish*, but I own I have an aversion to learned ladies, and the addition of a *bas bleu* to your establishment, will I fear draw on you no little ridicule.”

“ But when learning is unaccompanied by conceit or pedantry,” said Eloisa, “ I cannot conceive it can ever be a subject of ridicule, except to those whose opinions are a matter of indifference to me.”

“ Oh, I have all the respect in the world for learning,” said her Ladyship, “ but I would rather see it in a masculine than a feminine habit at any time.”

Miss Worthington arrived, and was received by Eloisa with all the affection she felt. The pleasure was mutual ; Harriet’s

warmth of heart was gratified by such a reception, and all her attachment to Eloisa which neglect had somewhat chilled, returned in full force. Free from all narrow and illiberal feelings, she contemplated the improvement in Eloisa's person and appearance with admiration and delight.—“ But though she is more beautiful than ever,” thought she, “ there is yet something wanting. Yes, the happy joyous look she once wore, when rambling through the gardens of Riversdale manor, is gone, nor does the increased brilliancy of her eyes, or the dazzling hue of her fine complexion, recompense the gazer for the deficiency.”

For some days, Eloisa felt happier than she had been for a long time, in the restored society of Harriet; but there were subjects on which they could never wholly agree. Harriet could not endure Lady Harcourt, nor could she support constant dissipation, and she was not of a disposition to conceal her feelings.

A superb villa, which Eloisa had lately purchased on the banks of the Thames, had become a favourite resort. Here private theatricals, recitations and concerts, with every fashionable game, every device to beguile the time, drew crowds of the gay and the dissipated. Till Harriet's arrival, Lady Harcourt was almost a constant resident there, and Rosalba was the unremitting attendant on Miss Riversdale.—Devoted to sedentary employments, except when required to amuse her friend, she was always to be found in Eloisa's apartment, a spot seldom visited by its fair possessor till the dawn of morning.

After the more general entertainments of the evening, the vigils of the gaming table succeeded, and Eloisa had, by degrees, been so completely entangled in the snare, that without any decided taste or wish for the amusement, her house was the resort of those most attached to this dangerous vice, and most persevering in the pursuit. She continually lost immense sums :—she

was not sufficiently an adept to encounter the veteran gamblers introduced by Lady Harcourt, and she had accustomed herself to think her fortune so inexhaustible, that there was no danger of injuring it.

She was recalled to some degree of recollection by letters from her agent, in which he stated his inability to answer the immense bills daily pouring in upon him. He was ordered at all events to raise the necessary supplies. The villa was not yet completed, though she had expended vast sums in decorations and improvements. Timber must be cut down; and various resources were suggested by the agent, in any of which, that he thought most expedient, Eloisa rashly acquiesced.

“ I wish I could dispose of that old place in Wales,” said she one day to Lady Harcourt; “ I have but one objection; which I believe ought to have sufficient weight to prevent me from even thinking of it. My father had a strong attachment to the spot, because it was the only inheritance

he derived from his mother, of whom he was uncommonly fond, and he regularly paid an annual visit there. I was too young to accompany him, so that I have never seen it, but Mr. Eversley has visited it, and describes the situation as dreary and desolate in the extreme, and the mansion as being in such a dilapidated state, as to be scarcely fit to inhabit."

How little did Eloisa suspect, that ere a fleeting period of time had elapsed, the old dilapidated place she spoke of, would become her asylum from the tumult of a world, into which she had rushed with such sanguine hopes of happiness—hopes! how seldom realized!

On the day the above conversation occurred, Harriet had accompanied Rosalba to the Richmond villa. The beauty of the situation, and the taste and elegance displayed in the fine plantations and luxuriant gardens, had charmed Harriet, and she had procured her cousin's permission to quit the smoke of London for a few

days, and enjoy the quiet and pure air of the country. She was delighted with the interesting Rosalba, and notwithstanding the retired manners and habits of the Italian, she often joined her in the *boudoir* in preference to the gay parties that surrounded Eloisa.

The wonder and curiosity that Miss Worthington excited in the circles of fashion, was a never-failing subject of ridicule to Lady Harcourt; but Harriet so thoroughly disliked, and so utterly disregarded her, that for once, her Ladyship had the mortification to discover she was neither loved nor feared. The mind and manners of Harriet were alike independent; she disdained the courtly phrase and soft speeches of the fashionists.

“It is no wonder to me now, Eloisa,” said she, “that you have not married. I should despise you, if you had selected any one of the butterflies that hover about you here. How unlike they all are to Henry Percival! I am really sorry chance has

not thrown him in my way, since I have been in this new world."

"But you forget, Miss Worthington," said Lady Harcourt, "that Henry Percival is now Lord Avonmore, and a man of fashion; it is probable, that you would find him transformed into a different character since he was a boy at Riversdale."

"In manners, perhaps," answered Harriet, "but he had a certain sterling quality in his composition, that would defy all the arts of the enchantress Fashion, to transform him into one of those buzzing insects that hover about Eloisa."

"Why certainly," said Lady Harcourt with sarcastic energy, "that is a sphere in which you are not very likely to encounter him, for it is a vicinity he seems peculiarly careful to avoid."

On this subject her Ladyship knew Eloisa to be particularly sensitive, and she had a malicious pleasure in reminding her of Lord Avonmore's neglect. Harriet clearly saw her malevolence, and resolved to at-

tempt to open Eloisa's eyes. She perceived that amidst all her gaiety and splendour Miss Riversdale was far from happy, and she suspected that the evil counsels of Lady Harcourt, were leading her farther than ever from the path of peace.

CHAP. XI.

NEW CHARACTERS AND FASHIONABLE PARTIES.

AMONGST the chosen friends of Lord Avonmore, the family of Morland held a distinguished place in his regard. General Morland was a man of high descent, and large fortune, and not more celebrated for bravery in his profession, than for the virtues that adorn private life; he had been a schoolfellow of Percival's, and their intimacy had continued from boyhood to maturity.

Lady Evelina Morland was the favourite friend of Lord Avonmore; she was by marriage related to the late Earl, and her character and conduct were precisely such, as to meet the warm admiration of his

youthful successor. Living in the gay world, uncontaminated by its follies and vices, supporting her own rank and consequence without dissipation or extravagance; still young and beautiful, with a mind highly cultivated, and an understanding of the first order; prudent and retired in her manners and habits, Lady Evelina was the delight of a numerous circle of friends.

Often, with a pitying eye, had she noticed the young and lovely Eloisa, and frequently had she sighed, when she beheld her led away by the baneful counsels of the Marchioness of Harcourt. It had never been Eloisa's fate to meet her. Lady Evelina seldom frequented those circles, where Lady Harcourt was most anxious to introduce the young heiress, and in public, her Ladyship's retiring unobtrusive manners were not likely to attract observation. That love of admiration, and strong desire to please, so predominant in the mind of Eloisa, rendered her always a conspicuous object; yet her wit and viva-

city, though brilliant and original, were wholly unaccompanied by conceit or affectation.

At a dinner at General Morland's, where Mr. Stanley had gone with Lord Avonmore, the day after the interview of the latter with Eloisa, she became the subject of conversation, and the rivalry of the Duke of Dorland and Lord Courtville for her favour, was mentioned among the fashionable topics of the day.

"If appearances may be relied on," said the General, "the successful candidate must be a happy man. I never saw a more beautiful and interesting countenance than that of Miss Riversdale."

"You know this young lady well, I believe Mr. Stanley," said Lady Evelina, "and will not wonder that the General, who met her last night in a party at Lady Algrove's, is half inclined to be in love with her. Her genius and talents I understand equal her beauty."

"She is indeed," said Mr. Stanley,

“singularly blessed by nature and fortune, and,” he added in a lower tone of voice, calculated only to reach the ears of her Ladyship and Lord Avonmore, “had she been happy in the friendship and example of a Lady Evelina Morland, her mind and conduct would, I have no doubt, have been equally worthy admiration.”

Lord Avonmore’s eyes beamed approbation of Mr. Stanley’s sentiments; and as Lady Evelina at that moment had hers fixed on his face, her discernment discovered that the subject was far more interesting to him than she had suspected.

“How deeply is it to be lamented,” said she, “that a young creature so singularly gifted should need an adviser, that might render her at once an ornament and model to her sex.”

Perhaps the suspicion that her Ladyship now imbibed, was one of those least according with her wishes. She had beneath her protecting care the orphan daughter of a beloved sister, whom she had reared

with the most anxious attention. Lady Henrietta Courland was a beautiful accomplished girl, of large fortune and high connexions; her disposition was naturally amiable, and beneath the guidance of such a maternal friend, it was no wonder that she became all that friend could wish.

The high opinion which her Ladyship and the General entertained of Lord Avonmore, his rank, his fortune, and the splendid abilities which, short as had yet been his career in public life, were already blazoned by the voice of fame, all concurred to render him a desirable object, with whom to entrust the honour and happiness of their youthful charge. The attractions of Lady Henrietta, though not so dazzling as those of Miss Riversdale, seemed, from Lady Evelina's knowledge of Lord Avonmore, far more likely to fix his choice.— Her beauty, though of a different description, was equal to Eloisa's, and her manners, sensible but mild, elegant yet unassuming, appeared far better calculated to

win his heart, than the more brilliant fascinations of the captivating heiress.

Had Lord Avonmore's acquaintance with Eloisa commenced at this period, Lady Evelina's judgment would probably have proved correct; but that strong attachment, which not all his firmness of mind had yet been able to conquer, had begun when he was yet too young to be sensible of the nature of his own feelings; and ere he knew he possessed a heart, it had been devoted to his early companion. Till the approaching arrival of St. Edmond had been announced at Riversdale, the delusion had continued; and then, and not till then, had Henry become conscious of his own danger.

Gratitude, honour, all demanded an immediate change of conduct; and in the first anguish of his mind at the discovery, he opened his whole heart to Mr. Stanley. A total avoidance of every object, that could tend to nourish and encourage a sentiment so inimical to the principles he

had ever inculcated, was the counsel of his parental monitor, and his Continental tour was the result.

How did he bless the friendly hand, which had defended him from incurring farther danger, when on his return Percival learned the alteration, which a short period had effected in the mind and manners of Eloisa. Yet it was long ere he dared to trust himself in scenes where he would be liable to meet her, and it was not till he found himself compelled to visit town, in order to attend his duty in Parliament, that he could be prevailed on by the solicitations of his friends to leave his country seat.

The first sight of Eloisa, as in all the splendour of her attractions, unconscious of his presence, she burst on his sight more beautiful than ever, and the object of general admiration and applause; convinced him, that though absence had calmed the violence of disappointed passion, much yet remained to be done; and the external

composure, which long habit and the strict vigilance he preserved over himself enabled him to assume, concealed a heart yet torn with the same sentiments, which had already once exiled him from his native country.

Exertion of body and mind was equally essayed, to banish every idea that he considered derogatory to his peace; and the fame and honour with which his political career had commenced, opened to him the path of ambition, which a mind naturally aspiring, and eager to fly from its own baneful meditations, did not reject; and every day the public prints teemed with panegyrics on the youthful orator, and the promise of high ability he displayed.

Eagerly, and with eyes glistening with delight, were they perused by Eloisa, and with gratified ear did she listen to the eulogiums she frequently heard, of the object of her own earliest and fondest regard. The generous open-hearted Har-

riet too, listened with extacy to the praises her old favourite.

“ That Henry Percival should prove all that is noble and excellent,” said she, “ can only be wonderful to those, who are unacquainted with the great and good qualities which distinguished him in childhood. Oh Eloisa ! he must yet be yours. Some strange cause must surely have operated to separate you, so completely did you seem by nature designed for each other ; and really, should I be fortunate enough to meet with a man suited to my own wayward fancy, I could scarcely be happy till you and Percival are restored to your former amity.”

Eloisa could make no answer ; it was a subject she dared not think of, and felt powerless to converse on, and she instantly changed it.

The circumstances attending the proposed marriage of Miss Worthington with her cousin, formed another instance of the eccentricity of her disposition. When

Eloisa questioned her on the subject, she answered that she believed it was an event that would never take place.

“For though,” said she, “my father planned it, doubtless with a view to my happiness, as I am convinced it can never be promoted by it, I shall certainly not suffer myself to agree to it. Long before George went abroad, I knew Louisa Stanley was very much attached to him, and I suspect he was no less partial to her; and if on his return I find the predilection continues, I shall candidly tell him my sentiments, and advise him to marry Louisa at once.”

“And will it be no sacrifice on your own part, my dear Harriet?” asked Eloisa.

“It certainly shall not,” she answered; “because, since I have considered the subject in this light, I have never permitted myself to think it possible, that I can feel for him more than the friendship to which, as a relation, he is entitled. Believe me, my dear Eloisa, if every one were to act

in the same manner, it would prevent a world of misery and vexation.

“ Mr. Stanley has a confined income, and whenever he dies, will leave Louisa a very small stipend. George need not seek for fortune, and in every other respect she is more than his equal. I have amply deliberated, and I am convinced I shall act rightly in promoting their union. If I am once assured they are attached, I could never enjoy a moment’s happiness with George, were I to marry him. Fortunately we have had few opportunities for intimacy, and it would be ridiculous indeed to fancy myself in love with any man, whose real tastes and sentiments are not known to me. Those of him to whom I give my hand, must in some degree assimilate with my own, or we should both be wretched.

“ I could never submit to the drudgery of a life of fashionable dissipation, and two long winters in town would inevitably kill me. A man of the gay world is, there-

fore, out of the question ; the winter yields me pleasures in the country, equal to those to be enjoyed when summer puts forth her richest livery,

“ And all the grateful country breathes delight.”*

I can ride or walk all the morning, taste the dear delights of the chase, where

“ The healthful huntsman with the cheering horn,
Summons’ the dogs and greets the dappled morn:”†

and I prefer a library in the evening, to the finest drawing-room your proud metropolis can boast : but if I marry, and our tastes did not happen to agree, I must inevitably sacrifice mine, for I should despise the man who had not opinions and pursuits of his own, and if they chance to be frivolous[“] and dissipated, I should despise myself if I yielded to them.”

“ So you are calmly looking forward to the prospect of a single life then, my dear

* Gay.

† Ibid.

Harriet?" said Eloisa smiling, "and with all your rare talents and acquirements, with your large fortune and personal advantages, think of sinking at last into an *old maid*."

"And if I really possess all those requisites to happiness, with which your partiality has invested me," she replied, "will they not tend to render me happy in any state? Independence of mind and fortune are to me equally desirable, and are not both far more secure in the single than in the married state? because, while I have nobody to consult or to control me, I shall certainly neither squander the one, or forfeit the other; and as to the mere appellation, do me I conjure you more justice, than to imagine it would weigh one grain in the balance.

"With the respectable I will try to support my own respectability, and to the censure or opinion of fools I am utterly indifferent; if I take care not to degrade the name, rely upon it the name will ne-

ver degrade me : so that finally, I have resolved if Sir George will be happier with Louisa Stanley than with me, to complete my own self-satisfaction and their felicity at the same time :—and now let us go to dress, that we may flutter about and talk nonsense at our evening engagement.”

Though Harriet by no means approved the dissipation in which Eloisa was immersed, yet she occasionally accompanied her into public, and on this evening was of her party at an assembly, where she soon began to grow weary, and was just soliciting her cousin to suffer her to order the carriage to return home, when Lord Avonmore and the Chevalier Morlini entered the room.

Eloisa did not observe them, till, with all her characteristic impetuosity, she saw the warm-hearted Harriet dart forward, and offering her extended hand to her old friend Henry, heard her congratulate herself on meeting him, with the same ease and openness she would have shewn at

Riversdale, in their days of early intimacy. Her advances were met with visible emotion, but with graceful readiness and cordiality by Lord Avonmore. Harriet's countenance glowed with delight, and when he expressed his pleasure at seeing her look in her usual health and spirits—

“It is no compliment,” said she, “to say, that the sight of you is the first real gratification I have felt, except the meeting Eloisa, since my arrival in the great world. How little did I think, when we last parted, that our next interview would be in such a scene as this; but how is it that we have not met sooner?” Lord Avonmore hesitated, and with her wonted *naivete* she added—“Oh I know the reason, you retain too many of your former propensities to live constantly in a crowd. Ah, you are Henry Percival still! Well, it is a comfort to find there is still one person who is not a slave to this potent tyrant fashion.”

Lord Avonmore suppressed a sigh as

she spoke. Harriet seldom lowered her voice, and Eloisa overheard all that passed. Lady Harcourt's attention was also excited.

“ Oh, behold the little *bas bleu*,” said she, “ she has actually seized Lord Avonmore, and is compelling him to listen to her boisterous greeting.”

“ *The ith* quite a *ruthtic*,” lisped out Lady Augusta Dorian, “ I envy her *cuth* strenth of *nervth*.”

Harriet soon after joined them, and Lady Harcourt could not resist the temptation, to make some satirical remarks on her late *attack* as she termed it.

“ Oh I was so delighted to see our old friend,” said the candid Harriet, “ that a much more formidable obstacle than all these fine beaux and Misses, would not have prevented me from addressing him, I assure you. He is exactly the same Henry Percival we always knew,” added she turning to Eloisa, “ and seemed as much pleased at the meeting as I was.”

“ Could he do less, my dear Miss Worthington ?” said Lady Harcourt, “ *les usages du monde* compelled him to answer your warm greeting, with *something like* similar cordiality.”

“ Lord Avonmore needs no compulsion,” said Harriet indignantly, “ to recognise an old friend. If he have been dipped in the Lethæan stream of fashion, he has not, like some of her votaries, plunged over head and ears in it ; but instead of his *heel* like Achilles, it is fortunately his *heart* that has escaped its baleful touch, and retains its *vulnerability*.”

“ I must fly,” said Lady Harcourt, “ I cannot possibly enter the lists with such a champion ;”—and so saying she walked off, and joined Lady Augusta Dorien in quizzing the *rustic bas bleu*.

The ball now commenced, and Eloisa, led out by Lord Courtville, danced with her wonted grace, and as usual attracted all eyes. Those of Morlini pursued her with unwearied gaze, and a total abstrac-

tion from every other object present, till recalled to recollection by the voice of the Marchioness.

“ You are lost in admiration, Signor,” said she significantly.

“ I am indeed,” was the almost indistinct answer.

“ Must not your friend St. Edmond have had uncommon stoicism,” asked she, “ if he would not have regretted loss of life, had he known the object he relinquished ?”

“ St. Edmond was a visionary, lady, for he believed all men good, and all women amiable.”

“ And did he die in that singular opinion ?” asked she.

“ His, lady, was probably the lot of mortality, to be convinced by experience of the errors of theory.”

Eloisa just then approached, and Lady Harcourt taking her arm said—

“ That Morlini appears to me only fit for a hermit ; it is a pity Lord Avonmore

ever dragged him from his mountain cell. In the midst of the Appenines, his sententious morality might be in character."

"Who is it that offends by subjects so inapplicable to the scene?" said Dorian, who had just caught her Ladyship's last words.

"'Tis only that queer piece of foreign wisdom," she answered, "whom Lord Avonmore carries about to reflect his own gravity on like a mirror."

"The Chevalier indeed," said Dorian, "appears to be a singular character."

"He is singularly disagreeable," said Lady Harcourt.

"What say you, Miss Worthington?" asked Dorian.

"That he is one of the most interesting men in appearance I ever saw," answered Harriet; "he talks little certainly, but every thing he says has meaning, which is no small recommendation in these days."

Mr. Dorian contemplated the countenance of Harriet as she spoke, with pleasure

and admiration. Unaccustomed to conceal her opinions, he saw that she disliked and despised the courtly manners of Lady Harcourt. Her eccentricity of character had first excited his attention; the utter contempt she seemed to feel for the triflers around her, accorded well with his own feelings; but though a professed satirist, Mr. Dorien was a man of approved worth and amiable disposition—he had as much benevolence of heart as Harriet herself, and though born and educated in the great world, he had never yet seen a female whose turn of mind differed sufficiently from the throng of fashionables, to induce him to offer himself to her acceptance.

In Eloisa he had found more real sense and originality, than in any one whom he had ever before known, and he had highly approved the choice of his brother; but in Harriet he had discerned so much independence of mind, joined to quick parts, with so little consciousness of superiority, that he soon became her fervent admirer;

and a lively conversation was supported by them, till the dance being ended, Eloisa, attended by Lord Courtville, approached them. His Lordship was leading her to a seat, when Eloisa's eyes encountered those of Lord Avonmore, intently observing them. Passing her with a silent bow, she saw him approach Adelaide Belcour, and the cordiality of their meeting confirmed what Adelaide had told her of their former acquaintance.

The glow of real delight mantled on the cheek of Adelaide, and after a few minutes Eloisa saw Lady Belcour remove, to make room for his Lordship between herself and her daughter. Adelaide was lively and clever, and had a flow of that kind of vivacity which passes current in the world for wit. Lord Avonmore was amused, and appeared to devote himself to her the remainder of the evening. Eloisa felt heart-sick, but she determined to persevere in concealing her feelings from every eye, and from Lady Harcourt in particu-

lar, whose ridicule on this subject she felt she could ill bear. Dorian approached her after his long conversation with Miss Worthington, with whose singularity of character he was more charmed than ever.

“There is an originality and *naivete*,” said he, “in the manner of your fair relation, very uncommon in a modern female; and the spirit, propriety and firmness with which she resists the attacks of ridicule, have at once astonished and amused me. She is one of the first I ever knew, who seems to despise *quizzing* too much to be annoyed by it.”

Eloisa, who was anxious at this time to appear ‘the thing she was not,’ exerted herself to say—

“Do you not recollect a promise you once made me, to explain that fashionable science for my edification? Do let me now profit by your instructions, for I acknowledge I am utterly deficient in it.”

“A modern fine lady, and make such a declaration!” exclaimed Dorian; “Oh

tell it not in Gath! But seriously, you are not aware of the task you impose on me, nor, when I unguardedly offered to initiate you, had I reflected on the magnitude of the undertaking. To explain it in all its various branches, would be a work of time; you must therefore content yourself with a few hints—indeed I am perfectly assured, that nature has not bestowed on you the requisite qualifications to enable you to become a proficient.”

“But cannot you enumerate some of those qualities?” asked Eloisa.

“If I do they will be scarcely intelligible to you,” he replied, “because your dictionary and that of a modern fashionable’s, are totally different. They are chiefly, too, of the negative kind: such, for instance, as a total disregard to the feelings of others, which, in your vocabulary, would probably be denominated the having no feeling yourself.—A happy opinion of your own wit and capacity, and a supreme contempt for those of every other person, are

also indispensable requisites. This, you would probably term self-conceit."

"Oh I have heard quite enough," cried Eloisa, "to make me no longer anxious to attain celebrity in the art, and to convince me that you are very severe on those who practise it. Is it not sometimes the mere effusions of vivacity and thoughtlessness, without any real malevolence, or ill-natured intention of giving pain?"

"Doubtless, it may be so with those who only occasionally practise it," he answered, "but I speak of your determined *quizzers*."

"A most odious class of beings," interrupted Harriet, "let us not waste time in talking of them; but tell me, Eloisa, who is that Lord Avonmore is now addressing?"

Eloisa turned her eyes in the direction to which Harriet pointed them, and observed a newly arrived party, amongst whom a young and lovely girl was particularly conspicuous. Lord Avonmore had

at their approach quitted the Belcours, and was now in earnest conversation with the beautiful stranger.

“That,” said Dorian, “is Lady Henrietta Courland, the niece of General Morland, who is the intimate friend of Lord Avonmore; and it is whispered, that by means of this young lady, their friendship will probably be more strongly cemented.”

The heart of Eloisa sunk—it had predicted the latter part of the intelligence; she saw, in this young lady, a far more formidable cause of alarm than Adelaide Belcour; but only more roused to exertion, she assumed a look of indifference, and though an unusual paleness overspread her countenance, she betrayed no other symptom of agitation. Glad to quit a scene where her feelings were so bitterly wounded, she readily acceded to Lady Harcourt’s proposal of accompanying her home. Here a select party, and the vigils of the gaming table, concluded the night.

Harriet refused to attend them, and re-

turned home, with a mind anxiously bent on rescuing Eloisa from the consequences of her close intimacy with such a dangerous character. But though she suspected much evil might ensue, she was far from aware of the extent of her Ladyship's plans.

Her own designs on her youthful favourite Henry Percival, Lady Harcourt soon discovered were frustrated, by the determined distance Lord Avonmore preserved towards her, and the most violent hatred took possession of her heart for him. Her penetration enabled her to assure herself, that his Lordship's early attachment was unabated, and that it was only his disapprobation of the mode of life and change of manners adopted by Eloisa, that separated them ; and she not only determined to promote a continuance of dissipation, but to exert all her influence to place Eloisa wholly beyond his reach, by inducing her to accept some one of her numerous admirers.

Sir Eustace Etherington, her Ladyship's professed ally, was the tool by whom all her schemes were promoted. His elegance, wit and address were well suited to her purposes, and his devotion to gaming, which had ruined a good inheritance, made her Ladyship a not less useful acquaintance to the young Baronet. The tie of interest alone connected them; for though Lady Harcourt believed, as the world in general did, that Sir Eustace was personally attached to her, self-love and vanity had for once deceived her—and she had yet to learn, that her coadjutor had plans of his own to accomplish, which he was far from intending to disclose to her.

The fortune, not less than the person of Eloisa, was the object of his wishes; he saw her total indifference to Lord Courtville, the Duke of Dorland, and to all her admirers, and by the most assiduous and unwearied attention, he sought, unknown to Lady Harcourt, to ingratiate himself in her favour. She had already lost immense

sums to him at different times, but from Lady Harcourt he had been taught to believe her wealth boundless as her turn for expense.

More than once, lately, Eloisa had been surprised by a degree of particularity in the Baronet's manner towards her, which, imagining him to 'be the professed lover of Lady Harcourt, had startled and displeased her. On this evening she felt indisposed for play, and at first declined it; but Lady Harcourt seeing her suppressed dejection, and eager to regain the influence over Eloisa, which she fancied the evident dislike of Miss Worthington towards her had tended lately to diminish, hastily took her arm, and leading her apart, said in a low whisper—

“ I implore you for my sake, my dear friend, to resume your wonted vivacity. your paleness, ere you quitted Lady Algrove's, has already betrayed the cause of this sudden dejection; let it not extend beyond me, and your secret is safe—but I

already perceive looks of suspicion. Do not gratify the world, and the coldest heart in it, by suffering prejudicial reports to be circulated."

A blush of indignation mantled on the before pale cheek of Eloisa, but deeply mortified, she felt powerless to answer, and was led by Lady Harcourt triumphantly to the table, where, inattentive to the game, spiritless, and bewildered by her own harrassing thoughts, she once more became a considerable loser.

Her purse was exhausted, and she was compelled to be the debtor of Sir Eustace to a great amount, but he only laughed at the grave air, with which she excused her inability to discharge her losses; and as he handed her at a late hour, or rather at an early hour, to her carriage, he again alarmed her by a warmth of manner and assiduity, which she in vain endeavoured to repress by her own distant deportment.

CHAP. XII.

THE EXCURSION, BELCOUR PLACE, AND THE
MARMOSETS.

THE wan countenance and suppressed dejection of Eloisa, on the following morning, did not escape the penetration of the observant Harriet, who anxiously sought an opportunity for a confidential conversation; but this was shunned with care by Eloisa; who dreaded nothing so much, as that her cousin should again allude to Lord Avonmore.

Her desire to banish reflexion led her still to fly to company and gaiety; and her perfect consciousness of her own power to appear to advantage, and to attract admiration, still urged her on. Lady Har-

court was become necessary to her, and though she had more than once wavered in her opinion of her, she could not finally resolve to relinquish an acquaintance that contributed so much to her amusement.

Indecision of mind, and the want of that firmness which would at once have rescued her from the toils of the Marchioness, were the fatal consequences of that early loss of a maternal friend, which had left her to form her own character. From the care with which she avoided all expostulation from Harriet, the latter was obliged to relinquish her design for the present.

The Birth-day was now over, and Miss Worthington sighed for the country.

“ I cannot endure this suffocating town any longer,” said she one morning at breakfast. “ I wish, Eloisa, I could prevail on you to accompany me into the country, and quietly to sojourn at Riversdale manor for the summer.”

“ To sojourn *quietly* any where,” said

Eloisa laughing, "is not now, I am afraid, either in my power or inclination; and as my presence is not requisite at Riversdale, I think I shall postpone visiting the manor for a few months at least. Besides, I have more than half promised the Belcours and Lady Harcourt, to be of their party into ——shire."

"Oh Eloisa!" said Harriet, who could no longer forbear speaking, "why will you thus ever be influenced by others rather than by your own excellent understanding? Suffer me to speak to you candidly."

"Certainly," said Eloisa smiling, "provided you neither attempt to persuade me to visit Riversdale, nor wound me by reflexions on my best friend."

"Oh! that you would but exert your natural discernment," said Harriet, "and judge for yourself. Not long, believe me, would you then give Lady Harcourt that appellation. How can she be your friend,

RIVERSDALE.

who would lead you into error, and make your existence like her own,

“ A youth of frolics, an old age of cards ”

“ You have conceived an unjust prejudice, very inconsistent with your general candour, Harriet,” said Eloisa ; “ Lady Harcourt’s extreme vivacity may subject her to censure, but I am assured it cannot justly extend to her heart or conduct.”

“ For your sake, I very sincerely hope you may be of the same opinion a twelve-month hence,” said Harriet, “ and willingly will I make my recantation ; but in the mean time I conjure you be on your guard, and trust more to yourself, and less to advisers.”

The elder Miss Belcour was on the point of marriage with Mr. Ellis, a man of large fortune ; and Eloisa and Lady Harcourt had promised to accompany the party in an excursion they were to make, immediately after the wedding, to a seat of Sir Herbert’s.

Though Harriet would have preferred knowing she was engaged with any other friends, yet she was glad that she would at any rate leave London, for she feared greatly that her health would be injured by the present life she led, and prepared for her own return to the country, with a mind anxious for the fate of her beloved Eloisa, and still very desirous to put her on her guard against the treachery of her pretended friend; but the infatuation to which she had so long submitted, resisted all the efforts of the anxious Harriet, and she was compelled to leave town with her good intentions unfulfilled.

Rosalba, when she heard of Eloisa's intended excursion, entreated to be permitted to spend the period of her absence in a society of Nuns, a few miles from town. Her attention to the duties of her religion, Eloisa was aware rendered this plan particularly desirable to her, and readily acquiesced, exacting a promise that she would return to her, whenever she should

issue a mandate of recal. To the great surprise of Eloisa, she learned that her mother-in-law, Lady Riversdale, was to be of the party at Belcour Place.

“And only conceive,” said Adelaide Belcour, who imparted this intelligence in a morning visit a few days before they were to leave town, “mamma has actually invited that odious Lady Marmoset, and her *six white* daughters, only because she fancied herself under some obligation to her, and she has accepted it with all the *sang froid* in the world.

“Really, if she be so unfortunate as to be burthened with such a tribe herself, I think she should be cautious not to oppress her friends with them;—besides which, from morning till night we shall hear of nothing but Henrietta Sophia’s drawing, Julia Matilda’s music, and Seraphina Maria’s taste for studying chemistry. Procure a complete set of new nerves, or you will not be able to endure the eternal praises of these accomplished misses from

their doating mamma. Thank God, Lord Courtville and the Dorians will join us, or I know not what would become of us."

Eloisa travelled in her own equipage with the Marchioness, and Lady Harcourt's followed with their attendants. Sir Eustace Etherington, too, was of the party, her Ladyship retaining him to escort them, and his own designs rendering it an excursion particularly agreeable.

They found a large company assembled at Belcour Place, and amongst the rest Lady Riversdale was already arrived, attended by her constant shadow Miss Danderville, who still supported her interest with her Ladyship, and by that adroit servility in which she was an adept, had rendered herself necessary to her. Lady Riversdale, since her abode at Bath, had lived constantly at the card table, and now devoted her time in general to that amusement.

The improved beauty and attractions of Eloisa were contemplated with an eye of

envy, and the officious Miss Danderville was anxiously watching the looks and conversation of the unconscious object of her malignity, to gratify the spleen of her patroness by reports of the giddiness and levity, as she chose to term the animation and vivacity, that distinguished the manners of Miss Riversdale. Lady Marmoset and her daughters were also arrived.

“Here they all are,” said Adelaide, “all the little Marmosets. The hen and chickens as Mr. Dorien calls them. Have not we assembled a famous party? with the amiable Miss Danderville, your *ci-devant* governess, to bring up the rear.”

Eloisa could not forbear smiling, when Lady Marmoset officiously presented her numerous progeny to her notice, introducing each separately. The young ladies were all nearly of the same age, very small, very delicate, and very fond of whispering together.

“It is really an immense tax,” said Sir Eustace Etherington, “to impose such a

brood on the attention of the public. I protest they always remind me of the six little white mice, that were changed into horses to draw the famed *Cinderella* to the ball. Oh for a magic wand ! to touch the shoulder of each of those little giggling damsels, that would effect the same transformation, and thus render them of some use in the world."

Belcour Place was a noble mansion, well situated in a fine country. The grounds around it were beautiful and romantic, and Eloisa was charmed, in spite of the gay life she had lately led, with the scenes of nature here to be enjoyed in all their beauty and variety. But she had little leisure to contemplate them uninterruptedly ; a large and gay party were continually devising new schemes of amusement, every day brought fresh engagements, and she found her time as completely occupied by gaiety as when in town.

Several times since they quitted Lon-

don, she had been surprised by a repetition of conduct in Sir Eustace Etherington, similar to that which had more than once startled her before she left it. Yet she believed him so wholly devoted to Lady Harcourt, that she was unwilling to think it could be indicative of any sinister design, but she was annoyed by the idea of being the object of unmeaning gallantry, and resolved to be on her guard with him in future. This subject of vexation she could not confide to Lady Harcourt, who, she was well assured, believed him unfeignedly attached to herself; but she resolved to behave very differently towards him in future.

The arrival of Lord Courtville, his sister Lady Augusta, and Mr. Dorien, added to the number and gaiety of the party.—The latter eagerly sought out Eloisa.

“The great magnet,” said he with his wonted vivacity, “has not lost its powers of attraction, by being removed a hundred miles from town; and here we all are,

drawn irresistibly into the vortex, with as much force and as little resistance as ever."

"I rejoice that *you* at least are come," said Eloisa; "you will find a plentiful source of entertainment for yourself in such a large company, and will contribute not a little towards it, by the powers of amusement you so eminently possess."

"Take care, lest I begin to think you are not the original character I took you for," said Dorien; "Miss Worthington would certainly tell you, that the speech you have just made was copied from your fair friend the Marchioness;—but apropos of your cousin—when and where may I hope to see her again? and tell me candidly, may a younger brother, do you think, form any hopes for himself in that quarter?"

"I have often thought," said Eloisa, "that you are peculiarly suited to her taste; the experiment, however, may easily be made, and you have the consolation

of being assured, that you will not for a moment be destined to the horrors of suspense. Harriet will decide your fate with her usual candour and decision; and if you are serious, you will, I assure you, have my best wishes for your success."

"With such encouragement then," said Dorian, "no unnecessary delay shall at least raise obstacles, and a very few days shall see me on my way to Worthington Hall. I have a friend who has lately purchased an estate not many miles distant, and I can, I have no doubt, procure from him a personal introduction; but will you not also furnish me with credentials?"

"Most willingly," answered Eloisa, "and I will seize every moment of retirement to prepare a packet for you, to deliver to Harriet herself from me."

"Be very quick then," said he, "and the intermediate days shall be dedicated to my friends here. In gratitude to you, I shall feel bound to exert my utmost efforts for their amusement; and I will even

assist in forming Lady Riversdale's card table, and walk about with a *Marmoset* on each arm to accommodate you."

"But we must provide *six arms*, or the unconscionable mamma will be grievously disappointed," said Adelaide, who approaching them had overheard the last speech. "Whoever is neglected, the little *white mice* must be attended to, I assure you, and an opportunity now offers for your first essay, for a walk is just proposed."

Dorien readily agreed, but Eloisa, seeing he was really anxious on the subject, declined, and determined to remain at home and begin the promised letter to Harriet. Dorien, with his wonted good-humour, extending an arm to two of the Misses Marmoset, offered his services, and glancing at the other four—

"Oh!" said he, "that I could transform myself into the form of *Briareous* himself, for your accommodation, and take

the whole fair party at once under my protecting wing."

"It is perhaps fortunate for us that you cannot," said Eloisa, "for however useful your *hundred arms* might prove, *one* such *head* as yours will I fear be found quite sufficient, we can well dispense with the remaining ninety-nine."

She now retired to her apartment to write, while the rest of the company had either joined in the walk, or were engaged at the card table; and having completed her letter to Harriet, she felt inclined to avail herself of the privilege of being alone, and strolled through a shrubbery to a summer house, in some fine plantations, not far from the house.

Here the novelty of retirement, added to the beauty of the scene, induced her to prolong her stay, till a footstep sounded on her ear, and the next moment she beheld Sir Eustace Etherington. He expressed surprise at beholding her there,

but Eloisa was inclined to think it was a surprise he did not feel; for she secretly apprehended that he had traced her steps, and she immediately arose to return to the house; but Sir Eustace, much elevated and in high spirits, would have persuaded her to be seated. She declined it, adding that she had a commission to give Mr. Dorian, and was waiting to see him.

“And why,” said Sir Eustace, suddenly assuming a tone and look the most serious and respectful, “will not Miss Riversdale honour *me* with a commission?—As the brother of the favoured Lord Courtville, I presume not to dispute Mr. Dorian’s prior claims, but as the most devoted, may I dare to add, the most attached of her friends, who shall oppose my right to her confidence?”

Eloisa smiling, answered, that at present she had no confidence to repose, but that Mr. Dorian having promised to deliver a letter from her to a friend, she was

desirous of talking to him farther as to the excursion he proposed making.

“Mr. Dorian,” said Sir Eustace, “is not returned from walking, and Lord Courtville has not yet left the dining-room. Ah! who else so situated, invested with a privilege so precious, could hesitate to avail himself of it?”

Eloisa felt displeased, and vexed with herself for having afforded an opportunity for conduct she disliked; and was attempting to pass from the building, though Sir Eustace, standing in the door-way, still obstructed her passage, when she discerned Lady Harcourt and Adelaide Belcour approaching the summer house. Both at the same instant descried how it was occupied, and surprise and resentment darted from the bright eyes of the Marchioness.

“Pardon me,” said she, “in the voice of irony which she so well knew how to assume, “pardon me for interrupting your

meditations. I believed them to be solitary, or we should certainly not have intruded. I learned from Mr. Dorien, that you had retired to write letters, and not finding you in your apartment, heard from the servants that you had walked this way. Pray Sir Eustace do not let us disturb you. You are probably officiating as Miss Riversdale's amanuensis."

Both looked disconcerted—Sir Eustace hastened to make his escape, but Eloisa recovering immediately her self-possession, and indignant at her Ladyship's insinuations, repulsed all her attacks with a composure and indifference, that mortified and provoked the Marchioness, whose suspicions, once awakened, were now continually alive; and her watchful eye, ever on the motions of Sir Eustace, whatever his designs were, he was for the present compelled to suspend them.

Eloisa, meantime, was greatly annoyed by the conduct of Sir Eustace; an accu-

mulating game debt to him, had for some days harrassed and perplexed her, and this evening's interview had determined her, to be far more circumspect than she had had ever been in her deportment towards him.

CHAP. XIII.

“ Throughout the lanes she glides at evening’s
close,
And softly lulls her infant to repose,
Then sits and gazes, but with viewless look,
As gilds the moon the rippling of the brook.”

CRABBE.

THE unwished-for assiduities of the Baronet. were not the only subject of annoyance to Eloisa at this time. Adelaide Belcôur, who had in town renewed her acquaintance with Lord Avonmore, chose to make Eloisa the confidante of an attachment, which she had the vanity to fancy might, if it were not already so, become reciprocal; and continually teased her with her hopes, fears, and conjectures on the subject. Eloisa, who knew Lord

Avonmore too well not to believe her hopes and fears equally vain and fruitless, would fain have avoided listening to them, but this she soon found was impossible.—The volubility of Adclaide was equal to her anxiety, and she forced Eloisa to hear all her reasons for believing his Lordship was partial to her, founded on a variety of common attentions paid her at different times, during her first knowledge of him, at her uncle's, and the readiness and politeness with which he had recognised her in town.

To escape from a persecution of this sort, Eloisa had one evening contrived to evade Adelaide, who was the only one disengaged from cards, and while she looked over one of the tables, hastily quitting the room, passed through the glass doors of a back drawing-room into the extensive grounds. Through a serpentine walk of a considerable length, she reached a stile that led into a fine meadow; here she stood, musing on the probable consequen-

ces of Dorian's address to Harriet. He would soon be on his way to Worthington Hall, and she sincerely wished he might succeed, because she thought there was a peculiar similarity in their dispositions, which seemed calculated to produce comfort in marriage; suddenly she perceived Sir Eustace, walking in an opposite direction to that she had come, and looking curiously around him.

The path he was in, she knew, would lead him exactly to the spot where she stood, and that she was the object of his search she had no doubt. Eager to avoid him, and assured that he had not yet discovered her, she leaped hastily over the stile, and ran down the meadow with an intention to reach the house by a circuitous route; but her way was somewhat obstructed by a vast herd of cattle, which she had some apprehensions of passing; and while her fears made her hesitate, she saw what her terror led her to believe was a *mad bull*, come galloping towards her.

Winged by alarm, she fled swiftly across the meadow, leaped a second stile, and determined to take shelter in a farm house at a short distance, from whence she could probably procure some of its inhabitants to guard her home.

A low hawthorn hedge divided the little garden surrounding the house, from the field; and breathless with running, she had just reached it, and was darting rapidly through a low wicket, on the other side of which grew thick bushes, when she found herself almost in the arms of a gentleman issuing from the house. She paused to apologize for her haste, as she thought to a stranger, when her eyes rested on the countenance of Lord Avonmore. It is difficult to say which appeared most confused.

“ Miss Riversdale !”

“ Lord Avonmore !”

—had escaped the lips of each in their first confusion, and Eloisa, endeavouring to assume a composure she was far from

feeling, was trying to account, in no very distinct manner, for her appearance, by mentioning the cause of her alarm from the bull, when, observing the direction of his eyes, and the look of incredulity he betrayed, she turned her head, and with infinite surprise and vexation saw Lord Courtville come from the house towards them.

Lord Avonmore immediately bowed and disappeared, leaving Eloisa standing in an embarrassment the most distressing. Lord Courtville approached, and she instantly related the cause of her appearance; his Lordship looked grave and disconcerted, but attended her immediately home. Very little was said by either during the walk. Eloisa felt mortified that Lord Avonmore should be left to conclude, that she came purposely to seek Lord Courtville; and she was unwilling that the latter should also imbibe the same opinion.

She saw there was some mystery attend-

ing her recent encounter at the farm house, and that Lord Avonmore should be in the neighbourhood was a subject of infinite wonder, and caused emotions she could not repress. Her return with Lord Courtville, whom the whole party considered her accepted admirer, appeared nothing remarkable, and therefore passed unnoticed; but the unusual taciturnity of his Lordship convinced her, that something singular had occurred at the farm.

Though still assiduous in his attentions, there had been a degree of absence in his Lordship's manner towards her of late, very unusual; and she felt assured there must be some latent cause for the alteration. Whether that cause was connected with the farm house adventure, remained to be discovered.

On the following day the gentlemen of the party had all rode out, and a card table being formed for Lady Riversdale, the ladies were strolling in the grounds, when they accidentally came

within sight of the farm house. Lady Harcourt remarked the beauty of the situation, and while she was speaking, they saw a figure walking slowly in the little garden, which as it turned to approach the house, they discovered to be a female with an infant in her arms.

“Is that one of its inhabitants I wonder?” said Eloisa.

“Oh, doubtless,” said Lady Harcourt, “and if you fear contamination, forbear to look at her, for she bears in her arms the emblem of her frailty. Poor damsel!” she added; “this, Adelaide, is certainly the very object of the dismal tale your mother was detailing to us yesterday.”

While she yet spoke, another person approached the young woman, and Eloisa’s quick eye and beating heart instantly recognised Lord Avonmore. He appeared to be speaking to her, and the attitude of the female betrayed that she was weeping.

“We had better return,” said Eloisa in

a low voice, "it will appear like impertinent curiosity."

Her companions acquiescing, they all turned into the next meadow, which led immediately into a lane. They had scarcely entered when they saw Lord Avonmore advancing towards them, as if coming from the farm; he was in a moment recognized by Adelaide, who eagerly ran forwards to greet him: he looked surprised, and in answer to Miss Belcour's address, said he was visiting a friend at some distance, and would have the honour of calling soon at Belcour Place, and politely bowing passed them.

"It was then the immaculate Lord Avonmore," said Lady Harcourt, maliciously glancing at Eloisa, "whom we observed condoling with that poor forsaken damsel."

"How very extraordinary!" said Adelaide.

"Not at all, my dear," said Lady Harcourt, "it is *very, very* common; and

pray do not expect Lord Avonmore to be, in every respect, an exception to the rest of the human race. By the bye, who can he be visiting in this part of the world?"

"Probably Mr. Erville," said Adelaide, "the brother of his friend Sir Edward, who has lately purchased the Worden Hall estate, only two miles from hence."

Eloisa could not join in the conversation; she despised Lady Harcourt's insinuations, but she certainly felt a degree of curiosity on the subject, which would never have been raised had Lord Avonmore had no share in the adventure. It was destined to be still farther gratified, for Adelaide now related the tale her mother had told the preceding day. It was simply this—The owner of the farm, a tenant of Sir Herbert Belcour, had one only daughter, whose beauty it was supposed had contributed to her ruin; she had been for a long time absent from her father's protection, for no ostensible cause, during which time her father and mother had appeared

involved in the deepest affliction. Lately, she had re-appeared, with the infant whom they had seen in her arms. Evidently a victim to seduction, her health had declined, and she was now approaching the last stage of a rapid consumption.

Eloisa shuddered—her acute feelings were deeply wounded by the melancholy narrative, and she sighed for the power to afford comfort to the unfortunate object of her pity, and the distressed parents; but, apprehensive of encountering Lord Avonmore, or of appearing impertinently curious, she was cautious in her walks the following day, to avoid the path to the farm. A few evenings afterwards, the weather being remarkably warm, after a sultry day which had detained most of the party within, they took coffee in a building in the plantations, after which Eloisa and Lady Augusta Dorien strolled through the shrubbery; her Ladyship, soon fatigued, rested on a seat, while Eloisa ran forwards to recal Lady Augusta's little Italian grey-

hound, which had leaped the railing at some distance; as she approached the enclosure, she heard the faint cry of an infant, and casting her eyes over the pales which divided the shrubbery from a narrow green lane, she perceived the figure of a female extended on the ground, with an infant on the grass beside her. Unhesitatingly she jumped over the railing, and approaching them, discovered the emaciated form of a very young woman, who, if she still lived, was evidently in a fainting fit, while the poor infant struggling beside her, was moaning piteously.

Too well Eloisa guessed, that it was the unfortunate daughter of the farmer she beheld, and immediately exerting all her courage, she knelt beside her, applied a *vinagrette* to the nose of the poor invalid, chafing her hands, and using every means in her power to restore her. . Soon she unclosed her eyes, and looking wildly round her, then staring vacantly at her humane assistant, burst into tears.

“ Do not be alarmed,” said Eloisa mildly, “ I hope you are now better ;” and taking the child in her arms, she said, “ I will carry your baby, and shall be happy to assist you when you are able to walk. I hope, as you appear so weak and ill, you have not much farther to go.”

The young woman still looked at her without speaking. At length, “ Oh Madam !” said she, “ how can I trouble a stranger, a lady like you too.”

“ Pray do not fancy I shall think it any trouble,” said Eloisa. “ Try to rise and lean on me, this damp grass may be very injurious to an invalid ;” and she kindly assisted her to rise with one arm, while with the other she held the child. The poor young woman, apparently overcome by her feelings, made no farther resistance, and they moved on towards the farm house in silence.

Who, that a few weeks before had seen Eloisa in a crowded party, where gayest of the gay, she was ‘ every thing by turns,’

splendidly dressed, and surrounded by adulation, would now have recognised her as with difficulty she hushed the baby to her bosom, while the poor sick parent, who appeared in a state of extreme weakness, rather hung than leaned on her for support. As they proceeded slowly forward, Lady Augusta, who had with great exertion to her delicate frame, pursued Eloisa to discover what detained her, now appeared looking through the hedge, accompanied by the six Marmosets, who had come to meet them with Miss Danderville.

“ For *heaventh thake* what are you doing *Mith Riverthdale*,” cried Lady Augusta in a faint tone.

“ Good gracious, what a poor sick looking creature,” cried one of the Misses.

“ And la, look at Miss Riversdale carrying the child !” exclaimed another.

“ And mercy, how it squalls !” tittered a third.

Eloisa, looking towards them, said she would be at home presently. “ I am only

trying my skill in nursing," said she, "and will follow you in a very short time."

They looked after her in astonishment, and Miss Danderville declared that Miss Riversdale had always singular notions, and very little idea of supporting her own dignity. Meantime, Eloisa proceeded towards the farm with her two charges.

The farmer and his wife, whose appearance was far above that of the lower class, came to meet them; they overwhelmed Eloisa with acknowledgements, but their looks of woe evinced the grief of their hearts, and greatly shock'd their young guest. She would not leave them till she had seen poor Elizabeth put quietly to bed, and then promised to call again to enquire after her. As she voluntarily uttered this promise, the mother looked smilingly at her daughter, and the latter in a voice of agony exclaimed—

"Oh Madam! you do not know whom you speak to thus kindly. You do not know!"

“Yes, I know all,” interrupted Eloisa, “do not give yourself and me pain, by alluding unnecessarily to your own misfortunes. Be comforted—if you have erred, I am assured by your manner that you are penitent; and then doubt not forgiveness and comfort, not only from every virtuous person, but from a far higher source. I will visit you again, and trust I shall find your health improved, and your mind more composed.”

So saying she quitted her, and joined the young party in the plantations, with spirits dreadfully depressed by the scene she had witnessed. Her encounter with poor Elizabeth was fully discussed at Belcour place. Lady Harcourt could not forbear some satirical remarks on female Quixotism; and Lady Riversdale hinted at the degradation of noticing a creature so depraved, saying with a supercilious air, that “she perceived Miss Riversdale had imbibed some of Harriet Worthington’s

precious independent notions ; but for her own part, she could not conceive that riches could quite place a person above censure, or authorise their possessor to perform the most eccentric actions with impunity."

" No indeed," said her echo Miss Danderville ; " besides, Ma'am, to notice creatures of that description, is really an encouragement to vice."

" And pray, Miss Danderville," said Dorien, " what would you have done in such a case ?"

" Why Sir," said she reddening, " I should have come home, and sent a servant to assist her, or something of that sort."

" And quietly have left her to die in the mean time. or *something of that sort*," said Dorien laughing. " Well, I must acknowledge Miss Riversdale's plan appears far the best calculated to save the life of a human being, though how she came so far-

to forget her dignity, as to be guilty of an act of humanity, I am at a loss to imagine."

Eloisa laughed—she was indifferent to all their remarks; actuated by the purest benevolence, her own heart told her she was right, and she disdained their contemptuous inuendos too much to notice them. Again she visited the poor dying object of her pity: she found her penitent and resigned; and though the idea that Lord Avonmore was interested for her, distressed and harrassed her whenever it occurred, she suffered herself to dwell on it as little as possible. She had hitherto thought him a stranger to all vice, and of the horrid crime of seduction even now she could not believe him guilty; yet appearances were strangely against him, and the constant hints and allusions she was compelled to listen to, annoyed and oppressed her. To Elizabeth she forbore to mention him; but except the name of him who had led her from the path of vir-

tue and happiness, she had heard from herself the whole of her calamitous tale ; it was precisely as Lady Belcour had stated it, and she learned with real satisfaction, that the poor victim's return to her paternal home was not the consequence of desertion, but of her own penitence. .

More and more interested for her, and for the unhappy parents, she relaxed not in her attentions, till death terminated at once the woes and life of Elizabeth. In her last moments, Eloisa had faithfully promised to befriend her infant ; and should death deprive it of its present protectors, to become herself its guardian. When the last breath was extinct, she quitted the chamber of affliction, followed by the prayers and blessings of the heart-broken parents ; and as she issued from it, she beheld what her attention to the dying sufferer had hitherto prevented her noticing, the figure of Lord Avonmore, whose eyes bore testimony that he also

had witnessed the awful scene. She could not speak, but silently passing him, quitted the house. In the garden he overtook her; he opened the little wicket, and as he held it in his hand, he said—

“ Will Miss Riversdale permit an old friend to offer his meed of thanks? Such humanity is worthy the daughter of my best friend, the pupil of Mrs. Lovel. Oh Eloisa—”

The full eyes of Eloisa were cast towards him as he uttered the last words, and she would have spoken, but her own name, reiterated near her, discovered Lady Harcourt, Miss Danderville, and Adclaide;—the most unwelcome sight she could just then have beheld. Each had her own motive for the malicious glances now darted towards her, and she was obliged to hear all their remarks, unable and unwilling to answer them.

She heard with surprise and satisfaction from them, that Lord Courtville had been

unexpectedly summoned to town, and had that evening left Belcour Place; and she rejoiced that she was at present freed from the attentions which, notwithstanding her discouragement, he still continued to pay her.

CHAP. XIV.

MISCONSTRUCTION.

COMPASSION for the deep affliction, in which the errors of their child had involved the unhappy farmer and his wife, induced Eloisa, one evening after Dorian's departure for Worthington Hall, to direct her steps to the farm; her gentle consolation soothed the poor mourners, and she returned in a frame of mind much depressed, through the shrubbery; but she was disinclined to join the party, and she entered the summer-house. Here, as if waiting for her, she was startled by the appearance of Sir Eustace Etherington. She would have instantly retreated, but he darted forward to prevent her.

Her increasing game debt with him, was a subject that had greatly harrassed her ; she had been tempted, the preceding evening, to hazard a much larger sum than usual, and her inability to discharge it before she returned to town, had caused her the severest mortification. The recollection that he now presumed on her obligation to him, crimsoned her cheek with indignation, and the bitterest self-reproach wounded her heart. Assuming, however, a look of indifference, she enquired where he had left the rest of their friends, declined the seat he offered her, and would have retired ; but with more assurance than she had ever before observed in his manner towards her, he detained her while he exclaimed—

“ No ! since fate has been propitious to my wishes, and for once has given me an opportunity, Oh suffer me to ask, why the usual condescension of Miss Riversdale towards me has lately been abated ?”

“ If there have been any alteration, Sir,”

answered Eloisa quietly, " it has probably been caused by your own conduct."

" If that conduct," he eagerly replied, " has evinced aught but the truest devotion to you, it has ill spoken my sentiments."

" Pray, Sir Eustace, suffer me to go," said Eloisa, " there can be no possible cause for detaining me; unless, indeed," she added smiling with assumed vivacity, " you can teach me how to pay my debts, and acquit myself of obligation."

" Name not such a subject," he answered, " I conjure you. But yes, I will teach you how to cancel all obligation, and make me tenfold your debtor;" and suddenly thrown quite off his guard, he added, " Oh suffer me, only suffer me to adore you;" and seizing her hand, he bent one knee to the ground.

She started back with an offended air, but what was her distress and mortification, to behold Lady Harcourt and Adelaide at the door of the summer-house, at-

tended by Lord Avonmore, evidently witnesses of the attitude and manner of Sir Eustace, though no part of the conversation had reached them. Smiles of surprise and contempt were visible, as they passed on without speaking.

Shocked at the misconstruction to which such a scene was liable, Eloisa broke from the petrified Sir Eustace with undisguised indignation, and hastened to the house. Here reflections the most unpleasant pursued her. In the eyes of Lord Avonmore she must appear guilty of the most excessive levity, in thus permitting a private interview with Sir Eustace; but her perfect consciousness of exemption from all intentional coquetry, determined her to be candid with Lady Harcourt, to discharge her debts to Sir Eustace, and then never again voluntarily to subject herself to attention, which had thus involved her in embarrassment.

Lord Avonmore had made his promised visit to Belcour Place, during Eloisa's walk

to the farm. Adelaide had seen the direction she had taken, and Lady Harcourt had traced Sir Eustace to the summer-house. They knew Eloisa must return that way, and instantly it occurred to her, that the Baronet was gone purposely to intercept her. The Marchioness knew Eloisa too well, to doubt for an instant the reception that the assiduities of Sir Eustace would meet; but the opportunity of misleading Lord Avonmore as to her general conduct, was too inviting to be rejected. Adelaide was too desirous to lower her in his Lordship's opinion, not to enter readily into the scheme; their spy Miss Danderville, who had walked forward, made the signal agreed on, when she saw Eloisa enter the summer-house, and Lord Avonmore, under pretence of seeing some part of the grounds, was conducted that way. All succeeded to their wish.

“We are unfortunate, Adelaide,” said Lady Harcourt with well dissembled indifference—“This, I believe, is the second

tender scene between the same parties, which it has been our fate to interrupt."

Adelaide was careful in her answer, for she wished to impress his Lordship with a favourable opinion of herself, and she forbore all remarks ; Lord Avonmore was uniformly silent, his feelings had received a severe shock, in the conviction of Eloisa's levity, when he had reason to believe her under a serious engagement to Lord Courtville, whose absence, it seemed probable, had afforded an opportunity for this interview. With a glow of delight inexpressible, had he watched her humane attention to the dying Elizabeth, and the discovery, that her heart was yet uncorrupted, had been a source of secret joy ; but how was it embittered by the scene he had just witnessed !—Could any thing have added to the abhorrence he felt of Lady Harcourt, the malignant pleasure with which she had spoken of the circumstance that had just occurred, would have effected it.

“ And this” thought he “ is her favourite confidential friend. With such an associate is it possible she can escape contamination?”—Disturbed and wretched he scarcely heard the conversation of his companions.

Eloisa, from her chamber window, saw them return; she saw Adelaide leaning on the arm of Lord Avonmore, and again she sighed deeply, as she reflected on the opinion, he might have formed of her, from what he had beheld. All chance for exculpation was lost, his Lordship declined a longer visit, and took his leave, with a promise, that if his stay in the country were prolonged, he would again visit Belcour Place.

To Lady Harcourt she candidly related the circumstances, attending her interview with Sir Eustace, and the disgust his conduct had inspired.

The Marchioness, to her surprise, only laughed with affected contempt; she was far from wishing for a breach with Eloisa,

and only saying, she believed Sir Eustace had laboured under a temporary deprivation of intellect, avoided all farther discussion.

Sir Eustace, awed by Lady Harcourt's terrific frowns, and finding that a scheme of removal was in agitation, pretended business in town, and departed

The plan now was, that the whole party should proceed on a tour, which they had for some time meditated, to view Matlock, Buxton, and the various natural curiosities of Derbyshire, a part of the kingdom, yet unexplored by Eloisa. Restless and internally unhappy, a change of place seemed at least to offer the attraction of novelty, and she entered with avidity into the scheme.

The town proved delightful, and the autumn was passed in travelling from place to place, till the Belcour's, who had promised to visit a friend in Staffordshire, quitted them, when Eloisa and Lady Harcourt decided on returning to town. The

former separated from her mother-in-law, with as much apathy as they had met—her Ladyship's cordiality, to her daughter had by no means encreased by absence though she always experienced from her, far more attention than she merited; but the recollection of her father, and the love he once bore Lady Riversdale, ever stimulated Eloisa to shew towards her, the respect due to the relict of a parent so beloved.

Once more returned to the metropolis, Eloisa, anxious at once to disguise her own secret feelings and to banish thought, recommenced her career of pleasure with the same avidity as before. Her first care was to recal Rosalba, who charmed at her return, was delighted to resume her usual occupations. The villa was now completed and became a favourite resort. The autumn was remarkably fine and warm, and the villa afforded an agreeable retreat, when the heat of the weather rendered the atmosphere of the town oppres

sive. One of her first resolutions had been to discharge her debt to Sir Eustace Etherington; but the distress of a large family, which accidentally came to her knowledge, led her, with her usual thoughtlessness, to devote the appointed sum to their relief, and her debt of honour, besides another equally large to Lady Harcourt remained unpaid until she could receive a remittances from her agent, whose delays had for some time surprised her; but with the same carelessness she had as yet manifested in all pecuniary concerns, she still forbore any investigation into her affairs, and continued the same round of undiminished pleasure. The Belcou family was not yet returned to town, and most of her other friends were yet enjoying the salubrious breezes of the country.

Eloisa was therefore glad to adjourn to the villa, where Rosalba had almost resided. They frequently strolled through the grounds, late in the evening, when the

cool air, after a warm day, invited them abroad, and had several times listened to some fine strains of music, which had reached them from the river; it was repeated, till they became curious to know who was the author of their regular evening serenade; but Eloisa had made no acquaintance with any of those families who resided near, and Rosalba, though more constantly resident there, persevered in her usual recluse habits, so that it was improbable they could know or be known, but by report.

“ It must be some lover of your’s Rosalba,” said Eloisa, laughing, “ who knowing you are an Italian, fancies himself in a boat on the Arno, and you an inhabitant of its beautiful shores.” But wrapt up in impervious mystery, Rosalba had never ventured beyond the walls of the garden, and seldom even approached that part of it, from which she could be discerned on the water; and when led by Eloisa, to a pretty temple, which the latter had had

constructed on the banks of the river—fond of surveying the view of the Thames from it, her person was so enshrouded in a thick veil, which in long folds concealed her whole figure, that only the outlines were discernable. Nor was Eloisa's person more exposed to observation though she took less pains to conceal it.—“ I believe therefore,” she added, “ we must resign the idea of this musician being more than one of those common-life beings, who pursues his own amusement, regardless who listens to his strains.”

A letter from Harriet at this time arrived, in which she informed her cousin, that Sir George Worthington was returned to England, that she had received full confirmation of her suspicions relative to his attachment for Louisa Stanley, and that she had lost no time in declaring to him her resignation of his hand: she had positively declined listening to the professions of Dorien, till this affair was finally arranged.

“ When I have accomplished their happiness,” she added, “ I shall have more leisure to attend to my own ; but I shall do nothing rashly. I have told Mr. Dorian, that he as yet knows too little of me to be assured we shall assimilate. He must therefore wait patiently till the hunting season sets in ; and if his regard be proof against seeing his intended wife rise at the dawn of day, scamper after the hounds in all weathers, leap five-barred gates, return home wet and fatigued to pore over musty Greek and Latin in the evening, read prayers to the servants, and go to bed at eleven ; if instead of giving grand entertainments to people I despise, and who in return despise me. he can permit me to support two large schools which I have established, and twelve alms houses for those despised animals old maids, besides the same number for old widows and bachelors : if he will not compel me to waste whole winters in London, and vegetate in crowds ; why then, as I have no

design to act Katherine and Petruchio, I believe I must yield some of my fancies in return, and not expect him to turn hermit out of compliment ; so that you will still have a chance of seeing me an inhabitant of town, for as long a period of time in the course of a year, as my *Benedict* may require me to renounce the dear delights of the country.

“ In the mean time, my dear Eloisa, I entreat you to form your own happiness. Listen to no ill advisers, who seek to answer their own purposes while they degrade you in the eyes of the world ; you, who are formed to be one of its brightest ornaments.

“ A happy knack of hoping the best induces me to believe, that unpromising as appearances at present are, I shall yet see you in the situation which *fate*, I trust, has destined for you, as well as the active imagination and fervent wishes of

Your affectionate

HARRIET.

On returning one morning from Richmond, Eloisa found a card, with the name of Sir George Worthington, which had been left the preceding morning, and in the evening he made his appearance.

Harriet had succeeded in all her plans ; he was on the point of marriage with Louisa Stanley, and spoke in terms of enthusiasm of his fair cousin, and the real generosity of her conduct.

“ She is an angel,” said he, “ and she has made me the happiest being in the universe ; she tells me that you know her sentiments and intentions, and with you therefore I may talk of it, for she will not suffer me to name it to her, not even to tell her the gratitude, the eternal gratitude I must feel to her.

“ Believe me, Miss Riversdale, I could not have conceived there was so much disinterested kindness in human nature ; and while she detailed to me her intentions and plans for our happiness, I thought her perfectly angelic. Even Louisa was wholly

forgotten, and at the moment, such is the enchanting influence of real goodness and virtue, I thought there was no other human being half so perfect, or so well worth living for, as herself."

Eloisa was charmed with this eulogium on her beloved Harriet, and eagerly concurred in it. Sir George scrupled not to avow, that a repugnance to fulfilling his early engagement had protracted his tour; and though he had resolved finally on complying with the wishes of his father, he acknowledged his attachment to Louisa would have made it a sacrifice. Eloisa rejoiced in the felicity of her friends; her mind was by nature so liberal, that no self-repining was mixed in the generous joy she ever took in the welfare of others; and greatly as the fascinations of the world had induced her to neglect the Stanleys, her regard for them was unabated.

The Belcours were arrived in town, and again, many of her fashionable friends were to be met.—A report now every

where prevailed, of Lord Avonmore's engagement with Lady Henrietta Courland; his Lordship had been at the seat of the Morland family, since Eloisa had seen him in ——shire, but business now called him to town, where he arrived with the same party a short time after her.

In every newspaper that met her eye, she had the mortification to find allusions to this projected union, and the beauty of Lady Henrietta extolled with the most exaggerated epithets. It was a subject of joy to Lady Harcourt, who frequently contrived to introduce it in the hearing of Eloisa, and to retail every thing she had heard, that tended to confirm it. Supported and encouraged by the Marchioness, Sir Eustace Etherington had once more made his appearance beneath the roof of Miss Riversdale, who, on account of her Ladyship, as well as when she recollected her own debt to him, felt unwilling, however secretly desirous of excluding him, to refuse him admission.—

Gravely therefore accepting his obsequious apologies, for the offence he had given her at Belcour Place, the Baronet was at length reinstated in apparent favour. She felt great repugnance to give publicity to the tale, and therefore more readily became the dupe of her pretended friends—alarmed lest he should once more incur her displeasure, no farther presumption or disagreeable particularity was evident in his manner towards her, but the same respectful distance marked his deportment as formerly.

Again the nocturnal orgies of the gaming table were resorted to, and again was Eloisa involved in the round of perpetual dissipation, as had hitherto marked her fashionable career.

The agent still delayed remittances, and to all her remonstrances returned the most evasive and unsatisfactory replies—but to visit Riversdale, and in person to seek an explanation, was now impossible. She had promised the Marchioness and

Adelaide Belcour to give a grand masqued ball immediately after Christmas, and some superb additions and alterations in the great suite of rooms became necessary, and though at times she felt dissatisfied at beginning new improvements, while uncertain, whether the bills for those formerly done were discharged, yet, urged on by her Ladyship, who represented the utter improbability of any serious cause for distrusting Mr. Eversley's probity or ability—she unresistingly plunged again into fresh expenses; and was now fully occupied in drawing and looking over plans, and inventing new designs and decorations for the already splendid apartments, selecting new furniture, and superintending the execution of the whole.

CHAP. XV.

A MOONLIGHT PARTY ON THE THAMES.

Sweet is the concord of harmonious sounds
When the soft lute or pealing organ strikes
The well-attemper'd ear.

ROBERTS.

THOUGH still in appearance devoted to dissipation, Eloisa secretly often felt the weariness attendant on a life of pleasure, and rejoiced to escape from town to the villa. The grounds attached to it had been laid out under her own direction, with a taste and elegance which appeared in all her plans. The gardens and plantations sloped gently to the river; and a splendidly ornamented boat often conveyed

herself and friends on aquatic excursions. This was the only amusement in which Rosalba could ever be persuaded to join, and when the shades of evening obscured the glare of day, she would sometimes accede to Eloisa's earnest request to go with her, attended only by two servants, a short distance on the Thames.

During those nights when the moon lent her valued light, and the season did not prevent them from enjoying her radiance, Eloisa generally contrived to escape from town, and enjoy, with Rosalba, these private excursions. A flight of steps from the bottom of the garden descended to the river, and after their late dinner, wrapped in close dresses, the friends would unmolested enjoy their favourite amusement.

At a very short distance down the river, and situated on its verdant banks, stood a residence almost hidden by the profusion of evergreens in which it seemed embosomed. The house appeared handsome, but its owner, Mr. Godfrey, a mid-

dle-aged man, was a singular character, who seemed devoted to retirement. He had been frequently observed by Eloisa and Rosalba, sailing in a small elegant boat of his own construction ; he was generally reading, and attended by only one servant. One part of his grounds adjoined a narrow corner of Miss Riversdale's plantations, and more than once she had seen Mr. Godfrey himself leaning over the little railing that separated the two domains. They had several times met in this way by accident, and at length a sort of acquaintance was formed, and though Mr. Godfrey declined all visiting, he often stopped in his boat at the steps in Eloisa's garden to chat with her ; and after two or three of these interviews, he had given her an invitation one evening to join him in his sail, which, greatly pleased with his conversation, she had afterwards accepted. His manners and discourse charmed her, they were those of a man who knew the

world, whose naturally strong understanding had been improved by study, by travelling, and by experience.

In spite of fashion, in spite of dissipation and Lady Harcourt, Eloisa acknowledged to herself that she had never felt more rationally happy, than in retirement at her villa, where only Mr. Godfrey and Rosalba relieved her solitude ; but opportunities rarely occurred for enjoying this rational happiness. Lady Harcourt took care they should seldom occur ; it however sometimes happened, that her Ladyship had engagements in which she did not wish Eloisa to join, and then a respite of a few days enabled Miss Riversdale to seek her beautiful seclusion, and enjoy unmolested the society of her singular neighbour Mr. Godfrey.

During one of these intervals of pleasure, she repaired as usual to the villa :—the weather was extremely warm, and after dinner she and Rosalba wandered

through the folding doors, into a back drawing-room that opened to a veranda. From the back front of the house it commanded a beautiful view of the Thames; the moon was near the full, and Eloisa, leaning pensively over the railing of the veranda, contrasted the emotions produced by the calm beauty of the present scene, with the tumultuous sensations excited by a crowded party in hot rooms. From the veranda they descended to the garden, and the serpentine walk soon brought them to the steps that led down to the river. The surface, clear and unruffled, reflected the numerous objects on its banks. The glittering beams of the moon on the clear water had an effect the most delightful; the perfect quiet was undisturbed, save by the distant combination of indistinct sounds. All immediately around was tranquil—suddenly it was interrupted by the dashing of oars, and in a moment a boat advanced rapidly and smoothly down the stream.

The white dresses of the two ladies made them easily discernible, and the little bark paused at the steps.

“Is it Mr. Godfrey?” cried Eloisa, thinking that by the imperfect light she recognised her eccentric friend, in one of the inmates of the boat. She was answered in the affirmative, and strongly entreated to join him. There were two other persons with him.

“Only friends of mine,” said Mr. Godfrey, remarking that Eloisa observed them, “as odd and as quizzical as I am.” Then taking Eloisa’s hand he led her into the boat. “A young lady,” said he, “who, I would hope, is as odd as the best of us, or she would not, even for an evening occasionally, prefer rowing about the river with an old man, to angling in a gay party for the hearts of the young ones.”

The strangers only bowed. Eloisa had not seen Mr. Godfrey for some time, and in the pleasure of meeting him, she had

forgotten the repugnance of Rosalba to being forced into company; and still keeping her arm, had irresistibly drawn her forwards. Mr. Godfrey would not suffer her to retreat, concluding her to be some friend of Eloisa.

“No, no,” said he, “we must have you both, you *must* come, and enjoy with us this fine scene, at this hour of enthusiasm, when beneath such a sky and such a planet, such cloudless radiance, such blissful tranquillity, we learn to admire and adore the bounties of nature, and of nature’s God.”

Neither of Mr. Godfrey’s companions spoke; they were all wrapped in cloaks, which it was his custom to keep for the use of himself and his guests, in their evening aquatic excursions, so that their figures were completely concealed. Reluctantly, and with shivering acquiescence, Eloisa felt, from the motion of Rosalba’s arm, that she was forced into the boat, which immediately glided forward.

“ Now, my fair friends,” said Mr. Godfrey drawing out his flute, “ let us have music ;

‘ Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears ; soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony ;’

and since

‘ Music is ordain’d
To refresh the mind of man,
After his studies, of his usual pain,’
‘ Come ho ! and wake Diana with a hymn.’ ”

So saying, he breathed forth the soft strains which Eloisa had often listened to from her garden, before she knew Mr. Godfrey, and wondered from whom they proceeded. He solicited her to sing the little air which she had given him a short time before, in one of their evening excursions. She complied readily and sung

AN ADDRESS TO THE NAIAD OF THE STREAM.

Nymph of the sea-green cell !
Within thy watery dell,
Amid thy coral caves,
In thy lonely, cool retreat,
The mossy rocks thy seat,
Which the foaming billow laves ;
Nymph of the Stream, Oh hail !

While o'er thee mortals glide,
The bark in safety guide,
Above thy fair domain.
Nymph of the Stream ascend,
And deign thy aid to lend,
As it skims the watery plain :
Nymph of the Stream, Oh hail !

In the last line, one of the strangers, in a voice of the most enchanting melody, and with exquisite feeling, joined Eloisa. She started, for the tones betrayed the Chevalier Morlini. In her first surprise she repeated his name ; who then was his companion ? a nameless emotion deprived her of all utterance, and she could only press the arm of Rosalba, as the conviction

that Lord Avonmore was also in the boat rushed at once on her mind; but even from this subject of strong interest, her thoughts were diverted by a sudden motion of Rosalba, who in almost indistinct accents said—

“I am sick, faint to death! Oh set me, I implore you, instantly on shore.” She turned her face from the boat—the long black veil she wore, was momentarily wafted aside by the breeze from the water, and Eloisa saw that her countenance was a ghastly paleness.

“My friend is ill,” said she, “Mr. Godfrey will have the goodness to suffer us to land.”

“Assuredly,” he answered, and instantly turned the boat. When they reached the steps, Rosalba unassisted leaped out.

“I go alone,” she whispered to Eloisa. “I am well, indulge me I supplicate you.”

Eloisa knew her too well to refuse the indulgence she solicited, and her own ideas were so confused, and her frame so tremb-

ling and agitated, that she felt glad of the excuse to retain her seat, till she had regained her self-possession.

“How majestic that figure!” said Mr. Godfrey, as Rosalba slowly paced the walk towards the house.

“A friend of yours, Miss Riversdale,” said the Chevalier.

“Yes, a dear friend,” she answered ;—but the tale of Rosalba was sacred, and she did not even allude to her being from the same country as the Chevalier.

“*You* will not, you must not leave us,” said Mr. Godfrey. “Let us yet awhile enjoy this glorious night. Come, my friend,” he added, addressing the hitherto silent stranger, “lay aside for a time the cares of greatness, and enjoy the luxury of tranquillity.”

“The greatest of all luxuries, my best friend,” said Lord Avonmore in a trembling voice, “and the one, believe me, which it has ever been most devoutly the wish of my heart to obtain : but fate has

hurried me into a busy scene, and with irresistible force brought me into public life."

"Of which I hope to see you the boast and honour," said Mr. Godfrey. "Formed by nature and education for great actions, you are placed by providence, where the talents with which it has endowed you may most benefit your country."

"And for my country's good shall they be exerted," said Lord Avonmore with enthusiasm; "for it I wish to live. The tranquillity, the domestic calm for which I sighed can never now be mine, and to my country I henceforward devote myself."

The bright beams of the moon played on Lord Avonmore's countenance as he spoke, and Eloisa's glistening eyes were fixed involuntarily on his. "Can this," thought she, "be Henry Percival?" and instantly the loved shades of Riversdale rose to her mental view, and tears stole silently down her cheek.

Hidden from observation by the veil that shaded her face, she listened with a beating heart. It had for some days been whispered in the higher circles, that a change of ministry was about to take place, and the Earl's words convinced her of the truth of a report that had reached her, that his Lordship was one of those mentioned to succeed to an exalted post. It was no longer, then, the Henry Percival of the shades of Riversdale she beheld, but the statesman Lord Avonmore.

An involuntary sigh that burst from her bosom, probably reached the ear of Mr. Godfrey, for turning instantly to Eloisa, he changed the conversation to modern literature, to poetry, and to music, his darling theme. Lord Avonmore joined in all with animation.

“With such noble resources for the human mind,” said he, “ought it ever to sink beneath those every-day trials to which it is liable? and how wonderful, that frivolous amusements should often so

exclusively engross its powers, as to leave no time for the cultivation of taste, in those delightful sciences !”

“ Here at least,” said Mr. Godfrey, “ we have an example to the contrary, and this fair Lady shall convince us that

“ Harmony is in immortal souls”
even,

“ Whilst this muddy vesture of decay
“ Doth grossly close it in.”

So saying, again he drew forth his flute, and joined her, as she again, at his entreaty sung a sweet air he mentioned—during the performance, she saw Lord Avonmore contemplating her, with looks of wonder, and when she finished—

“ How little,” said he, “ did I expect to meet Miss Riversdale at such an hour, in such a situation.”

“ Your Lordship probably thought, if indeed, you ever thought of the subject, that I had left all taste for retirement in the shades of Riversdale.”

“ Pardon me” said he in a voice of strong emotion, “ I never, for a moment, imagined that a daughter of Sir William Riversdale, the pupil of the excellent Mrs. Lovel, could under any change of circumstances, lose a taste for rational pleasures ; but where there is a total revolution in the habits or the mode of life, we are apt to think that the mind and the taste must in some measure partake the alteration.”

The Chevalier, who had listened with profound attention to all that passed, here interrupted him.

“ It is unfair,” said he, “ to draw any such inference.—Must a transient acquaintance with the great world, necessarily subvert our early taste for all that is sublime and beautiful in nature ? And may not the refinements and subtleties of art, rather teach us to estimate more justly, the simple charms of her unsophisticated rival ?”

“ In minds, such as your’s, my good

Morlini," said Lord Avonmore, " I grant you those subtleties would avail little.—Your principles and your enthusiasm alike guard you from their baleful influence—but we engross the conversation," and leaning over the railing of the boat, he seemed in a moment to be lost in meditation.

The feelings of Eloisa were cruelly wounded, she felt in an instant how fatally she was degraded in the opinion of her early friend, and her heart seemed bursting with anguish. "The moon was now obscured by clouds, and the night breeze began to blow cold.

" Prudence points out our return," said Mr. Godfrey, " let me not selfishly suffer my friends to incur danger."

Eloisa faintly articulated a wish to enquire after Rosalba, and the boat again approached the steps of the garden; recalled to recollection, by its suddenly stopping, Lord Avonmore came forward and offered his assistance in conducting

her from it—her trembling hand rested in his, and as her foot touched the steps, he said—

“What shall I say that will prompt Miss Riversdale to pardon the perhaps unauthorised freedom of my observations?”

In a low tremulous voice, she answered “once your Lordship would not have thought them unauthorised by,—by—friendship.” -

“On that early recollection,” he quickly answered, “is my sole reliance. Let me then trust, that the cherished friendship of Henry Percival, will plead the excuse of Lord Avonmore.”

She had no time to reply, he bowed and re-entered the boat—and sad and slowly, Eloisa returned towards the villa. Her mind was in tumults, and ere she sought Rosalba, she long paced the garden in silence. Scarcely could she believe, that for an hour, she had enjoyed the society of Lord Avonmore, that she had listened uninterruptedly to his voice, that he had

once more addressed her. The painful feeling of humiliation that succeeded, brought a conviction, that she might have preserved his attachment, had not her ambition to shine, and to be admired, tempted her to swerve from the simplicity of her early habits, and borne her unresistingly down the stream of dissipation. A light that gleamed through the glass doors of the drawing room, into the veranda told her that Rosalba was still there, and she hastened to find in the fascinating society of her favourite, an antidote to the inquietude which the late interview had created; but on the point of entering from the veranda, she was startled by the appearance of Rosalba sitting near a table, her arms resting upon it, her hands clasped as if in agony, and her eyes cast upwards with that wild and terrific stare, which Eloisa so well recollected, when she had first beheld her, under the horrid dominion of insanity. The hue of death was scarcely less ghastly than her pale

countenance, and had not the bitter tear of mental anguish that trembled on her pallid cheek, betrayed life and feeling, the death-like appearance of her features and complexion, would have worn the horrid semblance of dissolution. Thrown off her guard by extreme terror, Eloisa rushed through the glass door and entered the room; her entrance roused the faculties of Rosalba, and while Eloisa sunk, half fainting with alarm on a seat, the Italian seemed to collect her scattered senses. An agonised sigh burst from her, and then rising, she was slowly quitting the room, but Eloisa starting up, prevented her—

“My beloved Rosalba,” said she, “what has happened? What horrid cause has thus distressed you? Tell me, oh tell me, can I do aught to relieve you?”

“Yes, much,” she answered, “you can, and you must in silence mark my anguish, you can suffer me to indulge it unmolested, you can forbear all sollicita-

tion or inquiry, you can guard me from observation—and this is all that you or any other human being can now do for Rosalba.”—So saying, she deliberately retired.

Eloisa’s apartment adjoined the one in which Rosalba generally slept, and all night the footsteps of her unhappy *protegee*, at intervals, sounded on her ear.—Convinced by experience, of the firmness of Rosalba’s disposition, she resolved to question her no more. She recollected the emotion she had once before betrayed, on hearing that the Chevalier Morlini was in England, and it occurred to her, that in their abrupt meeting of the preceding evening, some circumstances of her past life were recalled to memory, which had caused this dreadful agitation.

At breakfast the following morning, to her infinite astonishment, Rosalba made her appearance with few traces of the emotion she had betrayed the night before, and though Eloisa felt convinced

that it had been passed in sleepless agony, no word or look escaped her, that could serve as an allusion to what had passed, except an unusual paleness, there was no manifest difference in her appearance, and her manners had wholly regained their accustomed grace and cheerfulness.

Such was the command that this extraordinary woman appeared to have obtained over her feelings, that Eloisa could hardly believe the scene of the preceding night had been real. After breakfast, Lady Harcourt arrived, attended by Lady Augusta Dorien, for the express purpose of conveying Eloisa to town with them. Lord Courtville seemed inclined to be as attentive as ever, and renewed his former mode of conduct, but Eloisa was now determined to discourage his suit with more firmness and decision than she had yet shewn. Though as yet, no alteration appeared in her mode of life, the lessons of Harriet had not been wholly given in vain.—Lady Harcourt certainly, no longer possessed the

unbounded influence she had once maintained over her ; but she was silent on the subject, even to Rosalba, and whatever were the suspicions of the Marchioness herself, she was careful to conceal them from observation.

CHAP. XVI.

“ Were I crown’d the most imperial monarch,
Thereof most worthy; were I the fairest youth
That ever made eye swerve; had force and knowledge
More than was ever man’s, I would not prize them
Without her love.”

SHAKSPEARE.

THE Christmas being over, the world of fashion flocked to town; but Lord Avonmore was no more visible after Eloisa’s encounter with him in Mr. Godfrey’s boat, till as she one evening entered the Opera-House, she observed him in attendance, on a party of Ladies. She was herself escorted by the Duke of Dorland, who, since it was publicly known that she had rejected Lord Courtville, had renewed his addresses.

The opera was uncommonly crowded ; in an opposite box she discovered Lord Avonmore, between an elegant looking woman and a beautiful girl, who was pointed out to her as Lady Henrietta Courland.

Eloisa's heart sunk, "and yet," thought she, "why should I so deeply deplore his alienation from myself; The affair of poor Elizabeth is yet unexplained, and surely if he were the author of her fate, how far better is it that mine should never be connected with his."—She felt tired of all around her, and anxious to return home. Rosalba was in town and she had promised her for that night, to renounce her usual engagements at Lady Harcourt's, and devote an hour to her, after her return from the opera. How delighted would she be were Eloisa to anticipate that hour. The idea no sooner occurred to her, than she resolved to return home and surprise Rosalba.

The Duke of Dorland had quitted the

box, she whispered Lady Harcourt her intention, and leaving her to *chaperon* Adelaide Belcour, who was also of the party, she was compelled to accept the escort of Sir Eustace to her carriage; he would have accompanied her home, but she positively declined his attendance, and while he yet leaned into the coach, to urge his request, Lord Avonmore appeared, leaving the Opera-house—his eyes met her's, they rested for a moment on Sir Eustace, and as if it renewed at once the recollection of the summer-house scene, at Belcour Place, after a moment's pause he passed rapidly on. Eloisa shrunk back in the carriage—she ordered the servant to close the door, and sick at heart scarcely looked whither they went, till on turning the corner of a street, the horrid cry of "Fire!" the calls of the watchmen and the sudden busting out of flames in a house immediately opposite, broke at once on her eye and ear. A crowd instantly thronged to the spot,

the horses where frightened, and the bewildered coachman, in alarm, found his progress completely impeded.

Eloisa began to be much terrified, the horses became quite unmanageable, and the interference of the mob seemed rather to encrease than diminish the evil. She let down the glasses and summoning all her courage to her aid, awaited with as much composure as she could assume, the effect of their endeavours to extricate her from the carriage; but all their efforts were for some time fruitless. The anxiety and error of Eloisa every moment encreased and when, at length, she felt herself thrown with violence from her seat—sense and recollection failed—when, after great exertions, she was with difficulty extricated; she was borne unconsciously from the charriot, by a gentleman, who had been active in assisting in her rescue, into a large mansion, close by.

A wound, on one side of her head, which bled profusely, alarmed the sur-

rounders, and medical aid was sent for. Restored, at length to some degree of sense, she felt acute pain, and unclosing her eyes, they rested on an elegant woman, who, seated by her on a sofa, held one of her hands; her head rested on the shoulder of another person, who held some restorative to her, and she was surrounded by several others. With restored sense, came a recollection of her late perilous situation, and alarmed at seeing herself in a strange place, she looked round with amazement. Her supporter removed from her side; when the unclosing her eyes proclaimed her restoration to life, and confused as was her memory, she fancied, with indescribable astonishment, that she saw Lord Avonmore, who now seemed to glide from her sight. It was then his arm, on which she had unconsciously rested—her dress was disordered, and her linen stained with blood. A surgeon entered, he examined the wound in her head, and advising that

she should immediately be put to bed, some attendants were ordered to convey her to an adjoining chamber. Eloisa felt as if she wished to inquire where she was; but the loss of blood, and the attempted removal, which caused the wound to bleed afresh, brought on a relapse of her fainting, and she was conveyed senseless to the chamber. Many hours of fever and delirium succeeded, and it was not till the third day, that the efforts of the faculty and her own naturally strong constitution, conquered the disease. The fever gradually subsided; a calm sleep, the first which had visited her eyelids since the accident, revived the hopes of the anxious friends around her—and she awoke from a refreshing slumber, to a confused recollection of all that had occurred. She saw herself in a room and bed with which she was unacquainted, and she looked round, and even attempted to raise herself, to be assured that she was awake; but she felt the effects of extreme weakness,

and sinking again on her pillow, her eyes encountered a well known countenance. She looked more earnestly to be assured she was not mistaken, and she met the happy smile of her beloved Harriet. Leaning over her, while tears of joy streamed from her eyes—

“You are better, my darling Eloisa,” said she, “you are better, and you are with friends who fondly love you.”

“Harriet! dear Harriet! said she,” Oh, where am I? Rosalba too!” and she extended a hand to each.

“You shall be satisfied in all and every thing,” said Harriet “let us but once more see you well.”

Eloisa perceived her own women were in attendance, “I am not at home,” said she, “and yet I have my own attendants.”

“You were fortunate,” said Harriet, “that at the time of your accident, you experienced the assistance and protection of Lady Evelina Morland, the most amiable

of women ; she informed your servants, and I had happily, arrived in town, in the course of the evening, while you were at the Opera and was thus enabled to become your immediate attendant."

" But how was I brought here" asked Eloisa.

" Lord Avonmore saw the accident, and brought you himself into this house," answered Harriet, but now ask no more questions my Eloisa," she added, " for perfect quiet has been strictly enjoined by the faculty,"

A confused recollection of having seen Lord Avonmore now occurred to the memory of Eloisa, she forbore all farther investigation, and from this time began gradually to recover.

In the evening, Harriet told her she must leave her for a short time. " Dorian is in town," said she, " and very busy with the lawyers; I found my presence would be necessary, and therefore determined to surprise you, but I have not seen

him since the night of my arrival. He knows that you are better, and I have promised him an interview at your house, this evening. I must therefore leave you for an hour, to the care of Rosalba and Norman."

Eloisa requested her to fulfil her engagement, with Dorian; she wondered she had not seen Lady Harcourt, but aware of Harriet's dislike to her, she forbore to mention her—but scarcely had Miss Worthington departed, when the Marchioness and Adelaide Belcour were announced—Rosalba immediately retired to the adjoining apartment, which was also dedicated to Eloisa's use. Her dislike, to Lady Harcourt, was great as that of Harriet herself, and she constantly avoided her when it was in her power.

The Marchioness expressed the most rapturous joy, at seeing her in a state of convalescence, and added "Miss Worthington has been such a careful nurse, that she has excluded us all, but you will

soon be again amongst us, for of course you will not choose to remain long here."

"As soon as I can possibly be removed," cried Eloisa, "I shall certainly forbear giving farther trouble to strangers."

"How do you like Lady Evelina Morland?" asked her Ladyship.

"I have not seen her since I have been enabled to judge," answered Eloisa; "she probably thinks, that as a stranger I would wish to avoid an interview till I am better; but I shall be anxious to acknowledge my obligation for her care and attention, which I understand from Harriet have been uniform and unremitting."

"Oh, no doubt," said Lady Harcourt, "Lady Evelina must be exactly one of Miss Worthington's models, but though her countenance is very desirable, you will of course wish to quit this house as soon as possible. The world we all know is ready enough to animadvert on such an adventure."

"Under the roof of General Morland,"

said Eloisa, " I should imagine I am safe from any disagreeable animadversions."

" Certainly," said Lady Harcourt, " but under that of Lord Avonmore, do you think yourself equally secure?"

" Lord Avonmore!" said Eloisa in unfeigned astonishment.

" Yes," said Lady Harcourt, " and as you happen to be in Lord Avonmore's house, and not in General Morland's, do you not think the world will be apt to put its own interpretation on your continuing here, longer than is absolutely necessary."

This was indeed intelligence, that took from Eloisa all power of utterance. To be, by the effect of accident, beneath the roof of Lord Avonmore, appeared incredible; she could only faintly answer, that she should certainly return to her own house, as soon as the faculty would admit her removal, and rejoiced not a little when her visitors retired.

The strong desire of Adelaide to visit the house of Lord Avonmore, had proba-

bly been the sole inducement for her visit; she had felt indescribable vexation, when Eloisa's dangerous accident and its attendant circumstances had reached her ear; nor was the Marchioness better pleased—she hated Lady Evelina Morland, and she dreaded lest the facility of communication which a residence beneath the same roof might produce, should subvert all her plans for finally separating Lord Avonmore and Eloisa.

But she need not have entertained any apprehensions on the subject. Lord Avonmore had been an alien for some days from his own mansion.

On the night of the fire, when, miserable and depressed, he was on his return from the Opera-house, which he had quitted sooner than the rest of the party, because he felt incapable of all enjoyment, he beheld the bursting out of the flames, and while surrounded by the gathering mob, he saw the dangerous situation of a carriage, which compassion for its inmates

and anxiety to relieve them prevented his recognizing, willingly he lent his assistance in quieting the horses, and finally extricating Eloisa from her peril. The moment of receiving her senseless in his arms, was the first of consciousness that it was the object of his secret thoughts whom he had rescued, from perhaps a violent death. He bore her into his own house, not a hundred yards distant, and instantly sent one servant for a surgeon, and another for Lady Evelina Morland, who was always his adviser and assistant, supporting her himself till their arrival.

During the dreadful period of her danger, Lady Evelina never left the house, and the violent agitation of Lord Avonmore, greatly as he strove to conceal his feelings, discovered his secret to more than one of his friends. His faithful attendant the Chevalier, alarmed at his pallid countenance, and the perturbation of his manner, seldom left him; and on that night when the physicians thought the disorder

must terminate fatally, and announced it as their decided opinion, his anguish could no longer be suppressed.

“ Good heavens !” he exclaimed “ that Eloisa should be destined to breathe her last in my own house ! She, who I once fondly hoped would have been its mistress. Yes, Morlini,” he added, “ The cause of my long concealed struggles can no longer be hidden from you, for you will partake my griefs. In the angel now expiring, you may discover the object of my earliest, my fondest attachment. Ah' then, conceive what I endured while seeking that St. Edmond, who I fancied was destined to deprive me of her for ever. . Yet even then, were they inferior, I think, to what I afterwards suffered, when I discovered the cruel alteration which a few short months had effected in her tastes, her pursuits, her disposition. Yet still, for I cannot now deceive myself, I lived in the hope that time might effect an alteration, that added years and experience might

convince her of the fallacy of seeking happiness in dissipation.

“ You will blush for my weakness, and I know I ought to blush for myself, while I acknowledge, that even the perfect conviction I have received of the dissimilarity that now exists in our minds, has not yet enabled me to conquer the early impression. In vain have I sought peace in different modes of life. Solitude, select society, company, all have failed in their effect, nor have the pursuits of ambition yet proved more efficacious; and I feel compelled to own, that not a station the most exalted, nor every worldly honour accumulated, could fill the vacancy she has left in my breast.” Then pausing—
“ But how vain is all this,” he added; “ if she lives, she lives not for me, and if she dies—Oh Morlini !” and covering his face with his hands, he sunk on the sofa.

“ This, and far more than this, I too have known,” said the Chevalier. “ The object of *my* warmest attachment is also

torn from me, perhaps by death, perhaps by worse than death, for her fate is a mystery. Yet have I borne it all—yet do I support life.”

The woe-worn looks of the Chevalier spoke his sensibility to the subject, and both awaited in trembling expectation the final intelligence; but Lord Avonmore's courage almost failed as the crisis drew near. When a footstep approached his dressing-room, he fled to his chamber, lest the person should convey tidings to which he dared not listen.

Lady Evelina was the first who announced a favourable turn in the disorder, and when once assured that the danger no longer existed, his Lordship immediately left the house, and repaired to that of Sir Edward Erville, where he determined to remain as long as Eloisa continued his inmate. Once he had a short interview with Miss Worthington, but it was during the period of Eloisa's danger, and both were too greatly agitated to converse.

Instantly on the first intimation of Eloisa's situation, had Rosalba, closely veiled, and her person with care concealed, flown to the bed-side of her benefactress, and never for a moment during her illness had her vigilance relaxed. Sleep was a stranger to her eyes ; day and night had she watched by her bed, administering her medicines, and noting every turn of her disorder. When life seemed to hang on a thread, and only the faintest respiration shewed that she still existed, Rosalba shed no tear, but with her face hidden from observation, sat the mute image of despair. When she revived, and the physicians declared they believed the danger to be past, Harriet beheld her prostrate on her knees, her lips moved, but the ejaculation of thankfulness that her protectress was saved, was heard only by him to whom it was addressed.

It was observable, that even from the eye of the medical attendants she was careful to conceal herself, always retreat-

ing at their approach, and disappearing into the inner apartment, whenever any other person than Miss Riversdale's own woman or Harriet entered the chamber. As soon as Eloisa no longer needed her care, at the early dawn of morning she left her, and departed for Richmoad, there to await her return to her own mansion. Eloisa sought not to detain her, much as she would have been gratified by her society, in the seclusion to which illness condemned her, because she was aware, that whatever were her motives for concealment they still existed, and long since had she determined never again to seek to penetrate them.

CHAP. XVII.

AN INTERVIEW—SECLUSION—AND A DISCOVERY.

EVERY day now added to Eloisa's strength and convalescence ; but before Lady Evelina Morland could pay her projected visit, which both parties ardently desired, the sudden illness of Lady Henrietta Courland, who accompanied a friend a few miles from town, obliged her Ladyship to leave London, and Eloisa immediately resolved to quit the mansion of Lord Avonmore.

On the following day, she was informed by the physicians that she might now be removed ; and Harriet having left her for a short time the preceding evening, to order preparations for her reception at her own

house, she was left alone. She had heard from Harriet that Lord Avonmore had quitted the house. Lady Harcourt and Adelaide had both visited her during the day. Norman only was with her, and to try her strength, and change the air of the apartment, she agreed to a proposal of Norman to walk into the first suite of rooms, leading from her dressing-room. She had felt some slight degree of curiosity to view the mansion, and leaning on the arm of Norman, she surveyed the pictures contained in a spacious dining and drawing-room, with an antichamber, and the suite terminated in a noble library, with large windows looking into the garden.

Over the chimney hung a full-length portrait of the present earl; it resembled him in very early youth, it was Henry Percival himself. Trembling and agitated, the pallid hue of Eloisa's complexion changed to a ghastly paleness, and Norman, terrified and apprehending that she would faint, entreated her to rest for a

moment on a sofa opposite. Involuntarily she sunk on it, and Norman flew back to the dressing-room for some restorative. No sooner was she alone, than again raising her eyes to the picture, all her early days of happiness recurred with full force to her mind, and clasping her hands in agony, she exclaimed—

“ Oh Henry ! beloved companion, best friend of my youth ! ”

But scarcely had the words escaped her lips, ere pale and almost motionless, she beheld Lord Avonmore himself standing at the door of an inner apartment. He advanced towards her, and seeming to recollect himself, yet with a countenance far different from that he had lately worn, he looked from her to the picture, and then approaching her, cried—

“ Can it be Eloisa who commemorated that blissful period ? ”

“ Oh, my Lord,” said Eloisa, “ I am very unguarded, but I did not conceive—I did not think—I knew not—”

“ Pardon me,” he interrupted her, “ I know all you would say ; you believed me absent, and it is mere accident that brought me here—brought me—at what a moment!”

Eloisa covered her face with her hand, and turning from him—

“ Forget it, my Lord,” said she, “ my spirits are still weak, and early recollections were suddenly brought to mind.”—Again she hesitated.

“ Forget it !” he exclaimed, “ Oh never, never can I forget what, amidst scenes so different, you have not ceased to remember !”

Eloisa blushed deeply, but Norman entering with hartshorn, &c. relieved her from an embarrassment the most distressing. Lord Avonmore now congratulated her, in terms, how different from those in which he had lately spoken, and with his usual polite distance, on her recovery ; earnestly requesting her still to honour her present abode, by remaining in it till her strength was more restored ; said he

should leave town himself the next morning for an uncertain period, and then quitted her, leaving her overcome with surprise and agitation.

A gleam of hope suddenly seemed to beam on her prospects ; that the heart of Henry was still her own, his looks had surely evinced ; but might not his engagement with Lady Henrietta have proceeded too far to allow him to retract, now that her own words had given him too much reason to believe, his sentiments were reciprocal. “ But could he ever doubt it ? ” thought she, “ could he ever disbelieve an attachment, which a thousand circumstances, now well remembered, must in their early intercourse have betrayed ? ”

On the following morning Harriet attended, and conveyed her to her own house, where her restoration to health was soon sufficiently completed to permit her to visit her villa, where, with Harriet and Rosalba, she condemned herself to utter seclusion, admitting no visitor but Mr.

Godfrey, till she was better able to bear the fatigue of company. Her good old neighbour eagerly welcomed her, and did himself the violence to quit his retirement, to enliven them with his society.

Every preparation for Miss Worthington's marriage had been concluded, and she only waited the perfect recovery of Eloisa to celebrate her nuptials. The marriage of Sir George Worthington and Louisa Stanley had taken place, and now that she had gratified this one of the first wishes of her benevolent heart, her own establishment was soon to succeed; yet all yielded to her love for Eloisa, and though it was now the season for enjoying country sports, she relinquished every wish and pursuit of her own, to assist in restoring health to her cousin.

Another powerful motive operated to induce her not to quit Eloisa; she suspected that illness and seclusion, with opportunity for reflection, had began a revolution in the mind of her cousin, and that the flighty

behaviour of Lady Harcourt, her inattention and unwillingness to leave, even for an evening, her own engagements to visit her sick friend, whom she affected to value so highly, had greatly tended to alter Eloisa's disposition towards her. Harriet was right in her conjectures; in the conduct of Miss Worthington she had seen a contrast to her own, which had shocked and tended to convince her of her errors.

In the distance preserved towards her by Lady Evelina Morland, after her restoration to consciousness, she fancied she saw her Ladyship's disapprobation of her character, and in the words, the manner, the looks of Lord Avonmore and Mr. Stanley, her first and earliest friends, she had read their participation in the same sentiments.

“ Ah, what,” thought she, “ is the admiration, the homage of the world, to the approbation of such hearts as theirs?”— Whenever the idea of Lady Harcourt occurred to her, it had lately been with a

nameless feeling of something approaching dislike, which, on recollecting all the friendship that lady had so long expressed for her, she sought to discourage ; still she could no longer be blind to the neglect she evinced, when Eloisa's health rendered her unable to contribute to the brilliancy of her parties, or the attractions of her nocturnal meetings.

More than once, she had suspected a secret intelligence between her and Sir Eustace Etherington, and the remembrance of her large debts to each, with her present inability to discharge them, preyed in secret on her peace. During this forced retirement, Mr. Godfrey became her constant visitant, and she now learned with surprise, that he was a relation of Lady Evelyn Morland, and had once made a conspicuous figure in public life ; but the loss of a wife and only daughter, in whom his earthly happiness was centered, combined with a disgust he conceived to the political situation he held, to

drive him from the world; and to solitude, relieved occasionally by a few select friends, he had devoted the remainder of his life.

Of superior talents and refined taste, strict in the performance of every religious and moral duty, yet always cheerful and entertaining, his society was precisely calculated for Eloisa in her present state of mind. In the course of conversation he often mentioned Lord Avonmore; he spoke of him as a man who would certainly prove an honour to his country, from his abilities and his virtues.

“ Few, I fear,” said he, “ are the young men who resemble him. Few indeed possess his great genius, extensive knowledge, and real learning, with such active benevolence, such true philanthropy. Who, but a Lord Avonmore, would seek out the poor victim of seduction, rescue her from vice, and restore her to the retreats of peace and virtue! Yet this has he done, even within a few months past.”

Eloisa listened with a beating heart, for the tale of poor Elizabeth occurred to her; and however unwilling to speak on the subject, she was too anxious to learn the exculpation of Henry to be silent: she related what she knew of that affair, and heard, with tears of delight, that it was Lord Avonmore who had rescued her from vice, and restored her to her parents.—The farmer had been a tenant of his own, but the disgrace attached to his daughter's flight had induced him to quit his situation, and take a small farm under Sir Herbert Belcour.

A suspicion, which proved just, that Lord Courtville was the seducer of Elizabeth, enabled Lord Avonmore to trace her; he commissioned Mr. Godfrey to visit her, and that active friend to the cause of virtue, had at length succeeded in persuading her to return to her parents; but grief and remorse had already inflicted a death-wound, and though by the exer-

tions of Lord Avonmore she was restored to her home, her mind was still unhealed.

Lord Courtville, after her flight from him, remained ignorant of her place of refuge till his visit at Belcour Place, when he discovered her beneath the roof of her father: but conscious of her approaching dissolution, she had positively refused seeing him, and the day Eloisa had encountered him and Lord Avonmore at the farm, was the only time he attempted to procure an interview. Lord Avonmore had visited the seat of Sir Edward Erville, purposely that he might be assured the unfortunate girl was safe with her friends, and his humanity alone had prompted the visits Eloisa had witnessed.

In pity to her dying state, he had persuaded Lord Courtville no more to invade her retirement, and it was probably the remorse felt by that young nobleman, and an apprehension of discovery by Miss Riversdale, that induced him to quit Belcour Place so abruptly.

How did the heart of Eloisa glow with pleasure at this testimony of Lord Avonmore's worth, and how did she reproach herself for ever having doubted it. No wish was now manifested to return to town and to the gay world. The projected masquerade, however, must be given—it had been publicly announced—but she secretly determined, that when once over, she would immediately ask the aid and counsel of Mr. Godfrey, investigate her affairs, and even visit Riversdale herself, if it became necessary.

The month of February elapsed in retirement, and in the beginning of March the grand entertainment was to be given. Lady Harcourt paid occasional flying visits to Richmond, but it was only to persuade Eloisa to return to town, and when she saw the increased influence of Harriet in the changed habits of her friend, she could scarcely restrain the invectives which rose to her lips ; she determined however to be silent, till the approaching *fête* should once

more restore Eloisa to the world, when she secretly resolved to exert all her art to retain her there ; for though she began to apprehend the derangement of her affairs, even *she* did not conceive any serious or permanent calamity was at hand.

Adelaide Belcour was always her companion, and joined in ridiculing the reformation, as they termed it, of the late gay heiress. When Harriet found Eloisa had decided on celebrating the *fete*, she declared her intention of leaving her, to enjoy the remainder of the hunting season in the country ; but Dorien was anxious to celebrate the marriage previously—it was therefore privately solemnized, and immediately afterwards they quitted town, on a visit to a seat of Lord Courtville in the north, where the bride could indulge her taste for field sports during the season, as well as at Worthington Hall.

CHAP. XVII.

A MASQUERADE AND THE DENOUMENT.

THE fashionable papers of the day had in form announced to the world, that “the grand masquerade, given by the lovely and accomplished Miss Riversdale, was to be held at her splendid mansion in ——street on the 12th of March.” How little did the gay unthinking crowd, who anticipated this sumptuous entertainment, think, that the fair heiress had been every day diminishing the hoards which she now so liberally squandered.

The expected day arrived, and saw Eloisa once more in the region of taste and splendour. Lady Harcourt lent her assistance, and the brilliant appearance of

the rooms excited general wonder and admiration. The company began to assemble about eleven, and before twelve the crowd was immense.

Simply, but gracefully habited, Eloisa, during the early part of the evening, moved through the different apartments unmasked; but anxious to beguile thought, and partake in a less conspicuous costume of the general amusement, she contrived, according to a preconcerted plan, to glide unperceived to her dressing-room, where Lady Harcourt awaited her. Her Ladyship had perhaps her own schemes, unknown to Eloisa; who, adopting the habit of a Circassian slave, which her Ladyship threw off, returned disguised to the mirthful scene, while the gay Marchioness, assuming some other dress, eluded discovery, except to those to whom she chose to become known.

A "Friar of Orders Grey," was one of the masks most conspicuous, for supporting his character well. His habit

was appropriate, and his language and manner so singular, that he had several times attracted the observation of Eloisa during the evening. Fatigued with her exertion, she had thrown herself on an Ottoman within the *boudoir*, when she was surprised, to see the Friar enter and quietly seat himself by her.

“Do I interrupt your meditations Lady?” said he, “or shall I again retire?”

“No holy Father,” she answered, “my meditations, in such a scene, are not of a nature to require solitude—They vary with every passing object and each moment presents a new subject.”

The Friar was intent on the rosary in his hand, and seemed scarcely to hear her reply—At length, raising his head, he said—

“You are fatigued Lady with the noise and variety of this motley scene: you, to whom the world pays almost undivided homage, you, who have the power to call

even religious votaries from the depths of retirement, to the regions of pleasure."

"You greatly overrate my powers father," said she "for, believe me, I am not quite so vain, as to think myself the general object of attraction—oh no, it is their own amusement, not me, they seek here."

"Can you," said he "think thus, and yet enjoy with avidity the society of beings, so thoughtless and inconsistent?"

"Thank you for the reproof contained in that question," she answered "and if I knew who asked it perhaps I might answer it candidly."

"That," said the Friar, "is impossible, I am impervious to all discovery, though I can read the thoughts of others with tolerable accuracy, and even now, I know you feel weariness and disgust, while all around believe you the most enviable of mortals."

The tone and manner, of the speaker, convinced Eloisa that this was no mere

masquerade speech, and she listened attentively while the mask continued—

“ It is difficult to know our real friends, could I unmask the hearts, as easily as the *faces*, of some of those present, how would that disgust you now feel be increased. Perhaps it may be in my power, to give you an opportunity, to judge for yourself. Could you not contrive to change your dress, and join me half an hour hence in this apartment?” Eloisa hesitated. “ It must be in a habit, in which, you have not yet appeared,” continued the Friar.

“ In a plain white domino then,” said Eloisa “ expect me.”

“ I will,” said the Friar, “ as y^on hand,” pointing to a superb time piece which decorated the *boudoir*, “ approaches the hour of two.”—

Eloisa, saying, “ I will be punctual,” disappeared immediately. Several plain dominos had been brought for her choice, and she hastened towards her dressing-

room to select the white one, in which she had promised to join the Friar.—She could not form an idea, who he was, nor what discovery he wished to make—but her curiosity was excited, and as amidst the throng of company, no danger was to be apprehended, she determined to gratify it. She was hastening forward, when she was stoped by a blue domino, in whom she instantly recognised Sir Eustace Etherington.—In a low whisper he said—

“ I am impatient for your communication, and shall be punctual to the time.—Are you going now to change your dress?” “ I am,” she answered, in a feigned voice, for she recollected, that having assumed Lady Harcourt’s discarded habit, he mistook her for her Ladyship.

“ Be quick then,” said he, “ I entreat you—remember two o’clock.”

Eloisa bowed, and passed on.—“ What can it mean?” thought she.—“ This is doubtless the appointment I am to witness,” and she expeditiously hastened to

change her appearance, and again sought the Friar, whom she found awaiting her arrival. The time-piece shewed the approach of the hour, the Friar motioned to her to follow him, they passed through the suite of rooms, most thronged by the company, and entered the music room.

Behind one of the light pillars that supported the orchestra, the Friar placed her, and by the folds of drapery that ornamented them, she found herself completely concealed. In a recess on one side, she saw a mask in a grotesque habit, which she was assured was the very dress assumed by Lady Harcourt, intent on reading a paper, and in a few minutes she was joined by Sir Eustace.

“Read that,” said she hastily “and tell me what you think of it, he obeyed, “well” said she “am I not now amply revenged? so end all your air built hopes, unless indeed your *love* should survive this overthrow of greatness, and you prefer

love and a cottage ; for the heiress, Miss Riversdale, is no more.

“ Look around you, and contemplate the last scene of splendour she will perhaps ever exhibit. For myself, I care not ; my influence, I can clearly discern, is terminated ; but yours, if you are wise, may be only^a beginning ; much must yet survive the wreck ; make therefore your own advantage of the intelligence ; a confirmation which I shall instantly seek, will decide my future conduct.”

Eloisa could hear no more, a crowd of masks thronged into the apartment ; she was obliged to quit her concealment, and the Friar was separated from her by the company. As she tried to make her way into the next room, she heard her own name repeated in a tone of inquiry ; but anxious to be alone, she was proceeding towards her dressing room, when she heard one of her servants eagerly asking for his Lady. On making herself known, he delivered a letter, which he said had just

arrived express. It was a strange hand, she hastily opened it; a deadly chill came over her heart; fatigue had already overpowered her yet weak frame, and she would have fallen senseless on the floor, if the servant had not summoned assistance and conveyed her to her chamber.

All was now confusion; a report of Miss Riversdale's sudden illness, reached the company, rumours, as to its cause, were darkly hinted by Lady Harourt and her friends. Busy whispers flew around, the numerous parties gradually dropped off, and long before the dawn of day the magnificent rooms were deserted, and only the hasty steps of the passing servants were heard.

On reviving, Eloisa had forbidden any medical advice to be summoned, and was on the point of excluding all access to her chamber, when Adelaide Belcour rushed in—

“ Bless me, Miss Riversdale, what is the matter?” said she. “ Pray return to

the company, the most horrid whispers, of some great loss of fortune, some pecuniary derangement are circulating in all directions, your appearance may contradict every thing, and Lady Harcourt sent me, to entreat you to come immediately."

Shocked at the unfeeling abruptness of a speech, so ill calculated to restore her composure, Eloisa, calling all her firmness to her aid, positively declined reappearing.

"Well then" said Adelaide "I must not stay, "for mamma has already ordered the carriage. I declare I am really shocked for you, but pray support your spirits, my dear. I think I hear mamma's voice, I must run off; but I hope it will be all contradicted to-morrow."

She then hastily departed and Eloisa closing the door of her dressing room, had forbidden all farther intrusion."

The letter, which had given such a severe shock to her feelings, was from a clerk of her agent it informed her, that

Mr. Eversley, after the sale of some parts of her estates, which she had authorised, completing the mortgage of others, and receiving all the rents due at Riversdale, had suddenly disappeared, leaving bills to a great amount unsettled, and her affairs in the utmost disorder. The doubts, prejudicial to his character, to which much of his late conduct had given rise, had induced a suspicion that he had left the kingdom, but as yet it was not absolutely ascertained.

The lawyer who had been employed in the sale of some of her estates, who was supposed to be best acquainted with Eversley's affairs, would, he added, wait on her the next morning, and give her farther information. A sleepless and solitary night succeeded this intelligence.

Rosalba, after superintending the preparations for the *fete*, had departed for Richmond, where, early in the morning, a messenger was dispatched, to require her

attendance on Miss Riversdale, but before she could arrive, Mr. Allen the lawyer had paid his promised visit, and all Eloisa's worst fears were by him fully confirmed. He had been indefatigable in his search and inquiries, the preceding day, among the friends of Eversley, and the result was a perfect conviction of his villany.

Mr. Stanley, who had learned the event from report, and still strongly interested for Eloisa, had suggested Mr. Allen's interference, and had even written a note by him, which he now delivered, recommending him strongly in such an emergency to her confidence. That Mr. Stanley should even thus far exert himself to serve her, was, in her present distress, and even amidst the extreme confusion of her ideas, a comfort inexpressible and desiring time to collect her thoughts, while Mr. Allen proceeded with farther inquiries, she was ringing to order the removal of an untasted breakfast, when two notes were delivered to her. The superscription •

of one was in the hand-writing of Lady Harcourt, and contained the following words :—

“ To Miss Riversdale.

“ Lady Harcourt is shocked to be under the necessity of troubling Miss Riversdale at the present season ; but by an unfortunate revolution in the wheel of fortune, she is compelled to solicit the discharge of the sum which the same fickle goddess transferred to her Ladyship, sometime before they left town for Belcour Place. Lady Harcourt is much concerned to learn Miss Riversdale’s present embarrassment, but concludes, from the positive order of exclusion issued last night, that she prefers retirement to the presence of her friends—Lady Harcourt will leave town to morrow, and will be happy to hear of Miss Riversdale’s restoration to health, and to her wonted brilliant place in society on her return.”

The other note, to her inexpressible mortification, was as follows:—

“ To Miss Riversdale.

“ Once adored Miss Riversdale ! You bade me teach you how to discharge the paltry sums for which chance had made you a debtor. Repulse me not now, as then, with disdain; but suffer me to fly to you; suffer me to lend you all the aid in my power; command my services, most lovely Eloisa, and with no hope of other reward than your smiles, believe that still I am the most

“ devoted of your servants,

“ E. ETHERINGTON.

Depressed, and shocked, with the strange scene of the preceding evening still in her recollection, Eloisa sat motionless after the perusal of the foregoing notes. That Lady Harcourt had received previous information of the ruinous intelligence that awaited her, was now evident;

but quick in decision, and rapid in performance, her whole soul revolted at the idea of one instant's delay, in satisfying the rapacious demands of her once pretended friends, and cancelling her debt with the detested Sir Eustace; she considered that to supply the present emergency she could raise a sufficient sum on her jewels. These she instantly committed to the care of Norman, with orders to transact the whole business; and then, enclosing the demand of each, to Lady Harcourt and Sir Eustace, she resolved to dispatch both immediately; but to whom could she delegate such a commission?

Bewilderd by her own reflections, and the conviction of her now desolate state, she sat in silent despondence, when she heard a step approaching; it might be Rosalba, but how was she astonished by the appearance of the Chevalier Morlini!

"Pardon this intrusion, Lady," said he "but I come commissioned by my friend, and impelled by my own strong desire to

serve you. Say, then, can I in ought be serviceable to you? My friend is compelled to be absent from town, on urgent business, but I would be his representative. Regard me not as a stranger. Believe, for once, that I have a claim to your confidence, and invest me with the privilege of a friend."

The heart of Eloisa was deeply moved; she remembered the subject of her reflections as he entered; and, humiliating as was the task, she determined to solicit him to wait on Sir Eustace Etherington.

"I will, Chevalier," said she "I will avail myself, of your offered interference. I have deserved humiliation, and I will not be deterred by false shame from accepting your unmerited services. There is a commission which I cannot myself execute; it is simply" (and a blush crossed her pale cheek as she spoke) the discharge of a debt—a debt to Sir Eustace Etherington—It was incurred at play—Oh! read that," she added, while the

deepest crimson again mantled on her face, “and tell me, if it can be too soon discharged. Unauthorised, but by his own presumption, to address me thus, I ought to blush at the recollection; but it is best to be candid; and to you, Chevalier, I will trust for preventing his farther intrusion.”

The dignified candour of her manner, the glow on her fine features, rivetted all the attention of the Chevalier.

“Most willingly,” said he, “will I undertake it—I came purposely to be of use to you, mine are no superfluous offers, they are suggested by disinterested friendship alone.”

“He now agreed to wait on Lady Harcourt and the Baronet; delighted to bear to Lord Avonmore this refutation of his suspicious relative to the latter, whose whole conduct towards her, even at Belcour Place, Eloisa scrupled not to detail, as well as her present confusion would permit; anxious, that as the Chevalier had

undertaken the commission, he should be in possession of every circumstance relative to him.

Earnestly requesting to be again permitted to wait on her, the Chevalier took his leave, bearing with him the gratitude of Eloisa, who saw in his visit and offers of friendship, a hope that Lord Avonmore was yet interested for her; though humbled, depressed as she now felt, the reflection, perhaps, inflicted a still keener wound on her feeling. When the Chevalier was gone, she wondered that she had had resolution to entrust him with such a commission; but her strong anxiety to be freed from obligation where she could now look only for insult, had hurried her on, and the confidence she was involuntarily inclined to place in the Chevalier, reconciled her to the step she had taken.

Regarding him as the friend of Lord Avonmore, she felt assured that she might confide in his honour, had not his own manners been so uncommonly prepossess-

ing, as almost to force friendship even from a stranger.

After the departure of the Chevalier, she began to collect her thoughts; and shutting herself into her apartments, gave way to all the anguish which this sudden reverse of fortune was calculated to produce.

CHAPTER XIX.

A REVOLUTION.

THE dream of dissipation was past, the hour of illusion was no more, and Eloisa awoke at once to all the horrors of her situation. That Eversley had left the kingdom was certain, and that he had carried with him property to a great amount was also ascertained. Deprived of immediate resource, her estates dreadfully involved, and her debts immense, how dreadful were her reflections! what food was here for self reproach!

In the first agony of her mind, when she found herself alone, her fortitude almost forsook her; the dreadful conviction of her errors rushed with full force on

her mind, and she was near becoming the victim of remorse. She cast an agonised glance on the costly paintings, fine statues, and rare ornaments, with which her mansion was adorned, and clasping her hands in a paroxysm of horror, she exclaimed—

“And thus have the fortunes of my ancestors been squandered—and thus have I thrown away the wealth, which my dear father, in his love, hoarded for his unworthy child. Would that I could for ever close my eyes on these monuments of my own weakness and vanity,” and in the anguish of the moment, she dropped, speechless with emotion, on one of the superb ottomans.

In this hour of distress, when forsaken by all her fashionable friends, Eloisa was left to her own melancholy reflections, did she become really sensible of the character of her Italian *Protegee*. Advancing softly towards her, Rosalba heard the effusions of her wounded mind, and approach-

ing the sofa on which she reclined, she knelt beside her—

“For the sake of your poor Rosalba, beloved Miss Riversdale,” said she, “seek to assume more fortitude. Why should you, in such an emergency, hesitate to adopt the only plan that offers to your view a hope of retrieving your affairs? To such a mind as yours, retirement can have no horrors, and—

“No, Rosalba,” cried Eloisa, “a voluntary retirement would have the most powerful charms, for I am sickened of the world, but a forced retreat, sought, courted as I have been, and now forsaken, deserted, by all those to whom my house, my purse, my heart, were ever open”—

“Say not all,” said Rosalba, “you have one inconsiderable being in your train, who, whatever be your destiny, will feel too happy, if she be but premitted to share it; one, my dear madam, who unseen, unknown, has studied your mind, your temper, and your heart; one, who in

secret has long deplored a mode of life, calculated at once to conceal all those rare virtues and talents that adorn your real character, to destroy your health and peace, and exhibit you to the world in a point of view the most unworthy of you."

Eloisa was by degrees brought to listen to the sensible reasoning of Rosalba.

"Ah!" said the latter, "am I not selfish in these persuasions? for how shall I enjoy retirement in such society? What delight will it be to me, to see you regain the strong powers of your mind by the salutary aid of quiet and reflection? and how shall I triumph, in beholding you look back with disdain on the trifles and triflers that in the great world had power to discompose your peace."

"The mild persuasive voice of Rosalba had its wonted effect on the perturbed mind of Eloisa. She mused for some minutes in silence, and raising her eyes, and fixing them on her friend, she said—

"Yes, Rosalba, I will be advised by you,

I will shake off this degrading thralldom, to which I have too long submitted, and to you will I henceforward look for comfort."

"Rather seek it in your own mind, dearest Miss Riversdale," said Rosalba, "there you will find ample resources, that will, if properly applied to, enable you to bid defiance to the malice of the world, and finally restore your peace; pardon me, if I say that I have long foreseen the inevitable approach, of this calamity. Distrusting your own judgment, and blindly confiding in those around you, it was improbable that ought but temporary ruin could succeed to the wild dream of dissipation in which you were engaged. The hint, which I have more than once presumed to drop, of the unworthiness of her, whom you have so long styled friend, were ever received with a look and manner so indignant, that I was discouraged from attempting farther to re-

move the film, which her deep duplicity had cast over your mental sight."

Eloisa listened in silence to the calm remonstrance of the excellent Rosalba; she was fully convinced, though late, of the errors of her own conduct, and after a day of deep reflection, during which her silence and abstraction, though closely watched by her penetrating friend, gave no alarm, because Rosalba felt assured it was the consequence of conviction, and would tend to laudable resolutions as to her future plans, she became more composed.

The first shock was over, and now the really great powers of her mind, recovering from the lethargy in which they had been sunk, began to display themselves. By the advice of Rosalba, she sought the counsel of the good Mr. Godfrey, who, though deeply hurt at the intelligence, readily lent her his assistance.

"Have you," said he, "sufficient confidence in me to put your affairs into my

hands? Short as has been my knowledge of you, I own I am interested in your welfare—I will, for once, emerge from solitude, see this lawyer, and enquire into the whole business—but first tell me your own plans.”

She informed him she had already summoned in all her bills, declared her intention of discharging the greatest part of her establishment, and of disposing at once of her fine collection of paintings, superb furniture, &c.—after which, she avowed her resolution to leave the metropolis and retire wholly from the great world, till her affairs were in some degree arranged.

He highly approved this scheme, said he would visit Riversdale himself, that he had a friend who would assist him in the whole, and voluntarily promised to correspond with her, and constantly inform her of his proceedings.

“We shall then go to the old mansion in Wales, I hope,” said Rosalba;

“ I think so,” said Eloisa, “ I cannot go to Riversdale, there every object will add to the bitter remorse I feel by recalling,”—

She stopped, for she was conscious that one chief reason for wishing not to take up her abode at Riversdale, was one she did not choose to avow. Rosalba did not pursue the subject then, but the next day she was commissioned to write to the old steward to announce their intention of visiting Llanymoryn Castle. With avidity she executed the task, and with equal alacrity undertook all the preparations and arrangements for their departure. Her anxiety to save Eloisa trouble and uneasiness, stimulated her exertions, and by her perseverance and assiduity a few days saw them ready for their journey to Wales.

Mr. Godfrey undertook the disposal of her house, furniture, &c.—he and the Chevalier Morlini were the only persons she admitted before her departure, and to each she would have declared her gratitude for the friendship they had evinced; but

would her emotions have permitted her to speak, she was not suffered, and speechless and depressed she could only present a hand to each, and ascending the carriage, bade a long adieu to that spot where she had shone for a transient period, one of its brightest ornaments.

Miss Riversdale's own maid, her footman and coachman, were all the attendants she retained, and with this comparatively insignificant suite, did she travel towards the seat of her ancestors. The journey was performed in safety, and the close of a gloomy evening brought them to the base of the steep ascent on which stood their future residence. The first view of this frowning edifice was calculated only to inspire gloom and dismay—its desolate forlorn appearance might have appalled stronger minds than those of the youthful travellers. Eloisa cast an eye of alarm on the Gothic turrets and lofty walls, and drew back, but neither spoke.

Hubert, the old servant of whom she

had often heard her father speak in terms of strong regard, was ready without the gates to assist them in alighting from the carriage, and several of the ancient domestics presented themselves. Eloisa could not answer the respectful address of the old man, whose eyes filled with tears as he contemplated the beautiful countenance of his young mistress ; her strong resemblance to her mother appeared instantly to strike him, and with a bow of respect he led the way through two grass grown courts, to an immense paved hall, from whence, by a finely carved oak staircase, they attained an apartment, perhaps one of the most habitable in the mansion ; but it was dark, lofty, and ancient, and the glaring light of a wood fire in a wide antique chimney, the oak wainscot, and small high casements, presented such a contrast to the light elegance and cheerful splendour of her late habitation, that again Eloisa could have drawn back ; but summoning

all her resolution she proceeded. Rosalba watched every turn of her countenance.

“This is gloomy indeed!” at length she exclaimed with a deep sigh.

“It is not very light, in truth,” said Rosalba, in a voice of forced gaiety, “but books and music will enliven it, and our own cheerfulness will increase that of our apartment. I have a rage for improvements, and now I think I shall find full scope for my genius. It will be famous employment to banish some of this antiquated grandeur, and introduce a little of my old favourite comfort into this room, which I am very much mistaken if a small portion of exertion will not soon effect.”

“You are the best comforter in the world, my dear Rosalba,” said Eloisa, “but it will be an Herculean labour to introduce comfort here, I fear.”

“I have no apprehension of the kind,” she answered; “employment, both of body and mind, I must have, or I shall die of inanition, and my first efforts shall be”

directed to making our habitation look rather more smiling."

This was much sooner effected than Eloisa could have believed possible, and very shortly she found the good effects of a regular life, in her own restored health.

The large and gloomy edifice was erected on the declivity of a steep ascent, and overlooked a rocky precipice, overgrown with moss, and the exterior enriched with the clinging ivy, which in wild luxuriance covered the building. Nor was the prospect from it more enlivening. Vast heathy mountains every where met the eye, unenlivened by any trace of human habitation, for the few huts with which this wild region was peopled, were hidden by the projecting crags, that guarded them from hostile winds and the fury of the elements.

Yet, isolated as was her dwelling, banished as she felt from that world, which, for a fleeting period of her existence, had constituted her greatest pleasure, never since her father's death had she felt such

real content, as was her portion from the time she took possession of her mountain retreat. The treasure she possessed in the society of the interesting Rosalba, was now fully appreciated; her conversation was an inexhaustible fund of entertainment.

In ancient and modern literature she was alike well informed, and her mind was equally rich in natural and acquired resources. The strong powers of genius were also hers in an eminent degree, and she would, with the most unwearied good-nature, fly from reading to music, to drawing, to description, or to recitation, as Eloisa suggested, and with no end in view but the contributing all in her power to make the life of her benefactress happy. Yet did no weak homage or servility mark her deportment, but when most humble she always appeared dignified and consistent.

Another employment soon presented itself, which at once afforded exercise and occupation for the mind and body. The extreme poverty of the lower orders of

people in this part of Wales, strongly excited their commiseration, and to afford their poor neighbours relief and assistance, they often quitted their solitude to explore the wretched habitations in the vicinity. The active benevolence of Eloisa, once roused to exertion, was not suffered again to slumber. Sometimes with Rosalba, and often alone, she visited the huts around, and soon became known to and beloved by their inhabitants.

Her bounty would have been unlimited as her kindness, had not prudence restrained her; but she had been taught by experience a lesson, which was to influence her future conduct. No longer the gay and richly adorned heiress, whose name was blazoned by the voice of fame, and quoted as the model of fashion and splendour, but simply attired, and screened from the inclemencies of the weather, she fearlessly traversed the woods and rocks around, to carry relief and clothing to their

distressed inhabitants, and often passed whole days in her charitable employment.

Rosalba delighted to see her so occupied, and after a day thus engaged, they would return to their home, which by the exertions of Rosalba was now made comfortable, and by a cheerful fire enjoy their books and music till the hour of repose. —It came sweetened by the recollection that the day had not been uselessly spent, and Eloisa and her friend found more undisturbed rest in the lonely chambers of their bleak mountain castle, than they had ever experienced beneath the splendid domes of the metropolis.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

